

*Catholic Initiation in a Minneapolis Context: Dissonance and Evolution*

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

In the history of Catholic initiation, there have been moments of dissonance between what the institution expects to happen in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist, and what actually occurs when they are practiced at the local level. Such dissonance often then leads to an evolution in the understanding and/or practice of these sacraments such as when Augustine's theology of imputed sin created an emphasis on infant baptism or when the drunkenness of early Christians at the Eucharist table led to shifting communion from an evening meal to a morning liturgy. In light of this historical pattern, this dissertation looks at a current form of dissonance and evolution in the specific context of the western suburbs of Minneapolis. Here, the dissonance relates to high rates of initiate attrition immediately following the ritual process despite institutional expectations that initiates be incorporated into the community as actively participating members. This dissonance is documented through two years of qualitative, interview-based research in multiple Catholic parishes as well as several Protestant churches on a comparative basis. Based on these reports, the dissonance, seen among Catholics and Protestants alike, seems to arise from the fact many initiates in this part of Minneapolis live as highly-empowered individuals who regularly negotiate a variety of disconnected social and relational networks – each of which vies for their attention. In this competition of social spheres, initiates commonly leave the church to participate in contexts that they perceive to “meet their needs” such as schoolwork, athletics, jobs, and other extra-curricular activities. As a result, the church appears to be in the early stages of an evolution in which initiation sacraments focus less on community incorporation and more on how they meet needs in an individual's faith journey.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on the negotiation between an institution and its constituents where there is *dissonance* between expectations and practice. The dissonance occurs as a result of the perfectly normal misalignment between institutional prescriptions and what ‘ought’ to be, and descriptions of what actually ‘is’ happening among people.<sup>1</sup> In the specific case of this thesis, the negotiation is between the Catholic Church and its parishioners in the western suburbs of Minneapolis (USA), and the dissonance relates to dynamics in the sacramental initiation process where the institution expects community incorporation post-initiation yet initiates commonly leave the community after completing the process.<sup>2</sup> Thus the ‘ought’ of assimilation stands in contrast to the ‘is’ of the post-ritual behavior. Such prescription/description dialectics are part of a larger sociological pattern and can be found in a variety of institutions and groups and the individual constituents of which such groups are made – from governments, churches, and businesses to families, friends, and social networks.<sup>3</sup>

Dissonance in these situations then often results in an evolution in expectations, behavior, or some combination of both in order to bring prescription and description into closer if always temporary alignment. Such slow change is also common in other institutions and groups, such as when governments rewrite archaic laws ignored by the people, businesses promote an employee who outperforms expectations, or the United States Defense

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<sup>1</sup> Gerhard Schurz, *The Is-Ought Problem: An Investigation in Philosophical Logic* (The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=W4IKyI5fzuMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+is+ought&hl=en&ei=2VjzTbdHiNqBB\\_zDocwL&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=W4IKyI5fzuMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+is+ought&hl=en&ei=2VjzTbdHiNqBB_zDocwL&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 9.

<sup>2</sup>“Incorporation” as we shall see in later chapters, is defined by those who participate in some of the main precepts of the church such as regular mass attendance, Confession, and various other common church rituals and events.

<sup>3</sup> Bebhinn Donnelly, *A Natural Law Approach to Normativity* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=9JfhVx43SoMC&pg=frontcover&dq=A+Natural+Law+Approach+to+Normativity++pp.+18&hl=en&ei=0lnzTbHYDojcgQfpmvTUCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=9JfhVx43SoMC&pg=frontcover&dq=A+Natural+Law+Approach+to+Normativity++pp.+18&hl=en&ei=0lnzTbHYDojcgQfpmvTUCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 19.

Department allows gay people, who have already been in active duty for generations, to ‘officially’ serve in the military.<sup>4</sup> In each situation, there is a gap between prescriptions and descriptions which for various reasons may, but need not, become untenable, and evolution results. Such is perhaps the case here, where some churches seem to be in the early stages of an evolution in the initiation process where they personalize the rituals in order to address attrition among highly-empowered individuals who typically choose relational environments in which to participate – and that often excludes participation post-initiation and increasingly excludes the ritual itself.<sup>5</sup> In this way, the church may be attempting to improve rates of incorporation in moving expectation and behavior into closer alignment.

These dynamics create an identifiable pattern of dissonance and its consequences, the *application of which to sacramental initiation among Catholic churches in the western suburbs of Minneapolis forms the focus of this thesis*. Here it can be said that though individuals commonly pass through initiation rituals relevant to their location and tradition, and it seems not unreasonable the institution organizing the particular ritual process will “know what it is doing” and just get on with the job, reality can be more complex. Groups of people inevitably have their own fissures and fractures derived from different origins and intentions, different interests (including self-interests) and understanding. Such factors commonly result in discrepancies and dissonance between ritual expectations and results as ritual participants negotiate the expectations of the institutional “gatekeepers” of ritual tradition and process. This negotiation may lead to an evolution in the initiation process where that is locally controlled, because the event is embedded in a social context which evolves, realigns, and is reconstituted. Should the ritual remain the same – and controllers

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<sup>4</sup> Carl Hulse, “Senate Repeals Ban Against Openly Gay Military Personnel,” *New York Times*, 19 December 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/19/us/politics/19cong.html>. The United States Senate, on 16-12-2010, passed a law repealing the ban on gay people in the military.

<sup>5</sup> I use the phrase “seem to be” here as representative of the fact that an evolution is not yet complete and we do not have the perspective of history by which to judge the effects the current sociological realities, if any, will have on the future initiation process in the western suburbs of Minneapolis. More is said on this in the final chapter analyzing the context.

may try to do just that – the risk is that it will cease being an event in the present on behalf of the future, but merely be an event in the present on behalf of the past. Thus dissonance and evolution in the Catholic churches of Minneapolis is just one example of a common negotiation between institutions and their constituents. Where the dissonance is sharp, this comes in part from the fact of institutional control lying beyond the locality, a problem shared by certain other churches and by national law codes and courts in plural societies, to take just two examples.

### ***Commonality of Dissonance and Evolution in Sociology***

Indeed this previous sentence is important to highlight and emphasize as discrepancy, dissonance, and evolution is hardly unique to the Catholic Church as it negotiates the realities of its various Minneapolis parishes. Discrepancies in prescription and description have long formed an important dimension of sociological inquiry since early in its disciplinary expansion. In 1908, the first volume of *The Sociological Review* argued that, “Sociological thinking must start with a clear cut distinction between the ‘is’ and the ‘ought,’ between the facts of social life and the conditions on which society actually rests and the ideal to which society should conform.”<sup>6</sup> Such discrepancies as those observed in this thesis are indeed pervasive across social environments as “sociologists stress that a gap always exists between ideal culture and real culture in a society.”<sup>7</sup>

The importance of this point demonstrates firstly, therefore, that this thesis inquiry follows normative sociological inquiry. Sociologists have commonly observed and written about relational tensions and the resulting fissures and disruptions in the social negotiations

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<sup>6</sup> L.T. Hobhouse, “Éditorial,” in *The Sociological Review* 1, no. 3 (1908): 5, Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=wF05AAAAMAAJ&pg=frontcover&dq=Sociological+review+hobhouse&hl=en&ei=KVzzTfiiJ4jTgQehubDYCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Sociological%20review%20hobhouse&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=wF05AAAAMAAJ&pg=frontcover&dq=Sociological+review+hobhouse&hl=en&ei=KVzzTfiiJ4jTgQehubDYCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Sociological%20review%20hobhouse&f=false).

<sup>7</sup> Diana Kendall, *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2010), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=uWIE8wqK1fYC&pg=frontcover&dq=sociology+in+our+times,+kendall+56&hl=en&ei=4lzzTfz6HYLLgQeK0rndCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=sociology%20in%20our%20times%2C%20kendall%2056&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=uWIE8wqK1fYC&pg=frontcover&dq=sociology+in+our+times,+kendall+56&hl=en&ei=4lzzTfz6HYLLgQeK0rndCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=sociology%20in%20our%20times%2C%20kendall%2056&f=false), 56.

between individuals and institutions across a range of cultures. Clifford Geertz, Michael Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu are among the more prominent of scholars who have documented discrepancies that occur between institutions and prescribed behavior and the individuals and actual behavior.<sup>8</sup> Geertz notes the importance of observing and analyzing such discrepancies as critical; since the relations within social systems are often not in harmonious balance, “The dynamic elements of social change arise from the failure of cultural patterns to be perfectly congruent with the forms of social organization....”<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the normative nature of the inquiry illustrates that the discrepancies in this thesis are not an indictment of the Catholic Church or its parishioners. Dissonance and evolution is endemic to social environments and is in fact, as we shall see, also observed in the initiation process of the Protestant churches that were also studied as a comparative sample: high rates of attrition persisted across all Christian communities in the fieldwork in this context. The Catholic churches were chosen as the main focus for pragmatic reasons in that it is the most clearly delineated institutional Christian structure with the longest tradition from which to compare patterns. There is more sustained evidence to compare the ideal culture with that which is real as the Catholic Church has had to negotiate various contexts and situations over the past 2,000 years. In terms of this research, then, it is no more or less susceptible than its Protestant counterparts to losing its initiates shortly after the process is complete.

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Christopher Johnson, *Diaspora Conversions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=IUqcwiC4c8QC&printsec=frontcover&dq=diaspora+conversions&hl=en&src=bnr&ei=BF7zTdPEEIWcgQfA4\\_nvCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=IUqcwiC4c8QC&printsec=frontcover&dq=diaspora+conversions&hl=en&src=bnr&ei=BF7zTdPEEIWcgQfA4_nvCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 285.

<sup>9</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Perseus Books, 1973), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=BZ1BmKEHti0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=geertz+interpretation+of+culture&hl=en&ei=nF7zTen1HdScgQfrk\\_XWCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=geertz%20interpretation%20of%20culture&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=BZ1BmKEHti0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=geertz+interpretation+of+culture&hl=en&ei=nF7zTen1HdScgQfrk_XWCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=geertz%20interpretation%20of%20culture&f=false), 144.

This latter point is particularly critical because I teach in a local Protestant university and therefore want to avoid the perception that this is a polemical document in regards to the Catholic Church and its initiation process. While more is said in the section on ‘Bias and Reflexivity’ in the methodology chapter (chapter three), it is important to note at the outset that my personal bias is one of sympathy for the Catholic Church having spent my childhood attending a Catholic elementary school and, more recently, enjoying the work of Catholic theologians.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, Richard Rohr, a Catholic priest from Arizona, was indirectly instrumental in prompting this research. After I read his book, *Wild Man’s Journey*, in which he documents the failure of American culture to initiate young men into adulthood on a general basis, I decided to change my thesis inquiry.<sup>11</sup> This happened in the first few weeks of moving to Edinburgh from the United States. In choosing initiation in the Catholic Church, I wrongly assumed an initiation process with high rates of incorporation where I could interview recent initiates related to see how they negotiated values in their various disconnected environments. This process, as well as the methodology for establishing dissonance and evolution in this context, is detailed below.

### ***Methodology and Religious Studies***

The methodology for establishing the pattern of dissonance and evolution involved two years of qualitative, quasi-ethnographic research among several Catholic churches in the Minneapolis area. Specifics of the methodology as well as the overall narrative are extensively discussed in chapters three-five, yet some detail is needed here to frame the overall flow of the dissertation. The research was initially designed for just one year of in-

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Merton and Henry Nouwen are two Catholic priests instrumental in my perceptions of spirituality.

<sup>11</sup> I was accepted into the University of Edinburgh to study parallels between conservative Islam and the Religious Right of America in which their differences were less a matter of theology and more a matter of empowerment. It was becoming clear, however, fieldwork in the Middle East would be challenging with a young family. Coincidentally, I was reading Rohr’s text at the time, and his claims prompted a change in focus to initiation among American youth.



depth fieldwork in a single parish – complete with sociological mapping, relational network development, and an overall macro-view of the individual church. The focus in developing this map involved studying “values internalization” among initiates who completed their rituals within the past five-ten years, and did not relate to the dissonance of initiate attrition and the evolution of the initiation process.<sup>12</sup>

This initial proposal, as stated earlier, emerged from the Rohr text. Since I grew up in Minneapolis, I was aware that people in its western suburbs are often quite wealthy and educated and are thus highly empowered to realize their individual sense of choice and desire for fulfillment. As a result they may navigate fragmented relational networks that are loosely interconnected at best, often sharing few common linkages, in order to achieve their desires or goals. It is common for individuals to move among occupational relationships, community friendships, family obligations, virtualized communications on the internet, various clubs, and church – each of which has their own set of values and prescriptive norms.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, I intended to interview at least forty past initiates from a specific parish to determine how the values of their initiation process were negotiated among the variegated values of multiple contexts. In other words, did their “Catholic” views affect the way they lived in other, disconnected contexts, and if so, how?<sup>14</sup>

However, this initial design proved difficult to accomplish. In working with confirmation directors in what became four different Catholic communities (in an attempt to gain the necessary interviews), I found the majority of young people who completed the initiation process in the previous five-ten years did not attend the church of their initiation on a regular basis, and the churches did not know where or how to locate more than a handful of

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<sup>12</sup> I have a complete, 40+ page chapter I submitted on this topic in March of 2005.

<sup>13</sup> This sentence describes much of my own experience in this context where, though my family was not as wealthy as many in this context, my friends and I still maintained many different, disconnected relational environments.

<sup>14</sup> “Catholic” is put in quotes here to acknowledge the range of possible views and their appropriation in an individual’s life.

them. This dynamic was true despite churches initiating at least fifty young people each year. The initiates were leaving their communities and the churches had no formal way of following up or keeping in contact with them. As one confirmation director who had been in the same parish for thirty years told me, “When you first described the study, I knew there was no way in hell I would be able to find them.” After nearly a year of research, I realized the study needed to be redesigned in order to continue.<sup>15</sup>

From this point, the research shifted. Instead of focusing on values negotiation among adolescents, it broadened to a sociological and anthropological study of initiation in that dissonance of a local institution (the church) was being created by a specific human behavior (initiates leaving the group post-initiation.) This seemed a logical evolution given the data of the first year in which a social institution finds itself in negotiation with its constituents as they participate in institutional rituals – while each is affected by the broader social context. If sociology studies institutional origins, traditions, and norms, anthropology is “the interface between us and them, between sameness and difference, between one and many, between is and ought....The underlying assumption is that there are systemic variations in the ways people organize and perceive their life-worlds...”<sup>16</sup>

This interplay of sociology and anthropology is an important dimension of the dissertation as it elicits a common methodology for doing religious studies since an anthropological focus is important for understanding a particular religious expression.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> As is stated later in this introduction in describing the individual chapters, chapter six addresses the possibility that the initiates of one parish are not “leaving the church” but are attending other Catholic churches in the communities in which they live.

<sup>16</sup> Andre Gingrich and Richard Fox, *Anthropology, by Comparison* (London: Routledge, 2002), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=wJfIECtenoYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=anthropology+by+comparison&hl=en&ei=I2HzTcbuJZTUgAeDt5XoCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=wJfIECtenoYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=anthropology+by+comparison&hl=en&ei=I2HzTcbuJZTUgAeDt5XoCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 72-73.

<sup>17</sup> Arvind Sharma, *Methodology in Religious Studies* (Albany: State University, 2002), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=jqGXdxZlc0kC&printsec=frontcover&dq=sharma+methodology+in+religious+studies&hl=en&ei=fmLzTfCWEMrIgQe3x7nXCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=jqGXdxZlc0kC&printsec=frontcover&dq=sharma+methodology+in+religious+studies&hl=en&ei=fmLzTfCWEMrIgQe3x7nXCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 41.

Furthermore, because the religious expression falls in the Christian pattern of faith, there are possible implications for ecclesiology and the way in which the church organizes itself in the process of contextualization. Thus, the evolution of the thesis kept it within the discipline of religious studies, but because of the implications for initiation in a Christian context, connects to the discipline of practical theology as well.

At this point, in noting the thesis evolution, an objection can be legitimately raised as to the new direction and claim of the research. Initiation in the Catholic Church is understood to be initiation into a universal community of faith that transcends the practical boundaries of a given parish as the “ritual community...is deterritorialized....a point made during each mass in the profession of faith, when people say together, ‘I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.’”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the disappearance of initiates in one location does not automatically create a dissonance if one of two things is possible: they are attending church in a different parish, or they are returning later in life. This is particularly relevant in the Minneapolis context where, as we shall see, initiates live as highly empowered individuals able to realize their personal choices. As such, they are likely to move from their community to attend college or take a job – and in fact are encouraged to do so.

This concern is considered in chapter six where recent quantitative research from the CARA research group and the Pew Forum on Public Life shows high rates of decline in mass attendance across America. It appears the attrition is growing more permanent and indeed results in a dissonance between expectations and behavior. Thus the issue became one where initiates are expected to realize their initiation through participation in a localized, visible

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<sup>18</sup> Eriberto Lozada, *God Aboveground* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2001), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=YK1HnNkWkloC&printsec=frontcover&dq=God+aboveground+eriberto&hl=en&ei=7m\\_zTenRNM7ogAfy1q3YCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwA A#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=YK1HnNkWkloC&printsec=frontcover&dq=God+aboveground+eriberto&hl=en&ei=7m_zTenRNM7ogAfy1q3YCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwA A#v=onepage&q&f=false), 104.

expression of the universal church; yet are often failing to do so.<sup>19</sup> Such concepts of initiation are not unique to the Catholic Church, of course, as initiation commonly includes an expectation of reincorporation. This fact is addressed in chapter two by surveying some of the well-known figures in initiation theory.

### ***Second Year of Research***

With the change in focus in place, therefore, I began a second, unanticipated, year of research focused on the pattern of attrition across a variety of churches while attempting to understand some of the cultural dynamics contributing to the disappearance of initiates. In contrast to the first year, the primary method of gaining relevant information in these communities involved interviewing confirmation directors in multiple parishes through the method of selective-intermittent ethnography – a somewhat uncommon, though established form of inquiry in which the fieldworker does not follow the usual course of investing themselves in a singular community, but makes contact on a relational “ebb and flow” basis.<sup>20</sup> Sociological mapping and the development of relational networks, though interesting, would prove beyond the scope of the research possibility in multiple parishes with several thousand people.

Furthermore, this change in data gathering was necessary because of the busy schedules of the confirmation directors with whom it may take four-six weeks to set up an interview. My research was characterized by intense interactions with pauses of days, weeks, or months in-between. I did manage to secure interviews in seven different parishes, and each of the confirmation directors revealed a pattern in which their initiates most commonly left the church following initiation. One of the confirmation directors told a joke that a “priest

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<sup>19</sup> Specific dimensions of this lack of participation are also addressed in chapter six.

<sup>20</sup> Lisa Murtagh, “Implementing a Critically Quasi-Ethnographic Approach,” *The Qualitative Report* 12, no. 2 (2007): 196, <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR12-2/murtagh.pdf>. Murtagh details her ethnographic interactions in her fieldwork in a local school where she became a member of the staff. Her previous and ongoing links allowed her to flow in and out of the context relatively easily without having to spend sustained time building relationships in order to access viable information.

was having trouble getting rid of squirrels in his yard. The confirmation director told him to bring the squirrels into the church and get them confirmed.....you'll never see them again.”<sup>21</sup> They also, as we shall see, described distinct sociological dynamics in which they are competing for the attention of the highly empowered adolescents in their contexts.

In addition to interviewing these directors, I spoke with several relevant Catholic figures in the area including a spiritual formation director of the largest Catholic high school who regularly works with adolescents of confirmation age, one of the lead bishops in the Arch-Diocese offices, and two priests in rural contexts some distance from Minneapolis. I also conducted a survey in a local Catholic university of fifty-six current undergraduates who completed their initiation within the past five years. The attrition was confirmed in each case, and a common theme from all the data began to emerge in which highly empowered youth are negotiating multiple disconnected relational environments of their choosing. They are often not choosing the church and are used to making their own, independent choices.

This reality of these adolescents who are not necessarily beholden to the church would indeed seem to be part of a larger pattern that extends beyond the Catholic Church in the Minneapolis context. In their book, *Religious America, Secular Europe*, Davie, Berger, and Fokas state that, “In England, confirmation is no longer a teenage rite of passage imposed by the institution, but a relatively rare event undertaken as a matter of personal choice by people of all ages.”<sup>22</sup> Though clearly confirmation is not yet “rare” in Minneapolis by virtue of the hundreds of adolescents attending in various churches, the emerging theme addressed in this research shows a growing individualized agency and empowered choice. These

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<sup>21</sup> This joke is referred to in both chapters four and five and was one of the early revealing moments in regards to the attrition this context experienced in initiation.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Berger and others, *Religious America, Secular Europe* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=0JQYxI3wnEQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=religious+america+secular+europe&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=Orz0TYuBMird0QG1x4zKAg&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=0JQYxI3wnEQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=religious+america+secular+europe&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=Orz0TYuBMird0QG1x4zKAg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 116.

dynamics seem to be contributing to an evolution in which Catholic churches in Minneapolis, and beyond, are offering to support individualized spiritual journeys by shaping the initiation process according to need. While it is still too early in the evolution to say, the trajectory of initiation in this context may parallel the description offered by Davie, Berger, and Fokas. At the very least, there is a dissonance in Catholic initiation in Minneapolis as well as an emerging pattern of evolution towards individualization.

Finally, in terms of the research process and in order to corroborate the descriptions of the overall context and to determine if this was a Catholic-specific issue or something broader, I conducted interviews and research in six Protestant churches of various denominational strains that held initiation rituals in baptism and confirmation. These included a Methodist, Lutheran, and Congregational church as well as a United Church of Christ. Each of these contexts described a pattern of high initiate disappearance as well. In one of the churches I phoned through a list of one hundred past confirmands provided me by the confirmation director and containing the most recently updated records from their database. I only reached two past initiates after an afternoon of attempting to make contact. The remaining initiates either no longer lived at the contact address given or were otherwise unavailable, having little to no ongoing connection with the church. In addition, only two of the fifty recent initiates returned for a church event that celebrated their graduation from high school.

Thus the results of two years of fieldwork in multiple contexts across a wide cross-section of the western suburbs of Minneapolis yielded a fairly clear discrepancy between the intention of confirmation as initiation into full and active membership of the church and the disappearance of participants in the ritual. One response by churches seems to have less to do with joining the universal Catholic Church and yielding oneself to the community than in making resources available to help people wherever they are in their faith. This shift is

occurring, it seems, because individuals in this context are empowered enough regularly to realize their desired choices. The institution therefore competes for their attention by offering the unique “product” of faith which the church can provide.

### ***Empowerment and Community Organization***

This individual empowerment forms a powerful dialectic with the way in which the community of Minneapolis tends to be organized – an important dimension in this research as how groups organize themselves affects the reincorporation dimension in any ritual of initiation.<sup>23</sup> Social groups can be placed along the cross-cutting spectrums of collectivity and individualism as related to institutional power and individual agency. This forms an ongoing dialectic between the two in which individuals must negotiate the societal norms which are always there and which may conflict one with another. The outcome of these choices and decisions is a continual maintaining, stretching, rejecting, fracturing, and incremental re-visioning of what some segments will see as vital and others as irrelevant elements of social life. Geert Hofstede writes,

The relationship between the individual and the collectivity in human society is not only a matter of ways of living together, it is intimately linked with societal norms (in the sense of value systems of major groups of the population.) It therefore affects both people’s mental programming and the structure and functioning of many institutions aside from the family; educational, religious, political, and utilitarian.<sup>24</sup>

As we shall see in the final chapter, sociologist Ferdinand Toennies provides a helpful model in juxtaposing these two forms of social organization: *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.

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<sup>23</sup> It is important to note here how social group and/or society will be used. A society is often equated with nationality or country on a macro-level. Here, however, ‘society’ will also refer to specific sub-groups within the macro-context. This is an important distinction since multiple social groups share geographic boundaries in this context, and each specific group is organized differently. For example, the city of Minneapolis has a large population of Hmong immigrants that tend to organize themselves more collectively while the field work context, as we shall see, is far more individualistic in nature. Thus, the macro-community of Minneapolis consists of multiple kinds of sub-groups that are organized differently.

<sup>24</sup> Geert Hofstede, *Culture’s Consequences* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=w6z18LJ\\_1VsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=cultures+consequences&hl=en&ei=erz0TZaTM6uq0AGCo5nrDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDcQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=cultures%20consequences&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=w6z18LJ_1VsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=cultures+consequences&hl=en&ei=erz0TZaTM6uq0AGCo5nrDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDcQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=cultures%20consequences&f=false), 212.

Toennies introduced the term *Gemeinschaft* to describe those social groups more oriented towards collectivism and bound by the shared beliefs and behavior of individuals asserting a common will.<sup>25</sup> Broadly speaking, the emphasis in such contexts is on the views, needs, and goals of the group before one's own. "Acceptable" behavior is clearly delineated and determined by the group who prescribes the social norms and common beliefs – often as handed down in the written and unwritten traditions, myths, and narratives.<sup>26</sup> In contrast to *Gemeinschaft*, *Gesellschaft* forms when the "identity born of community surrenders to the anonymity of mass society."<sup>27</sup> *Gesellschaft* is often paired with concepts of individualism in which individuals are isolated from one another by the fact that every person is of supreme importance, morally equal to others, and whose self-reliance and privacy pervades relational interactions.<sup>28</sup>

When applied to the organization of Minneapolis, therefore, the latter concept of *Gesellschaft* describes more closely its shape and structure. The downtown city limits of Minneapolis proper are surrounded by suburban neighborhoods extending some twenty-five miles in each direction. These neighborhoods are connected by vast freeway systems that lessen geographic limitations for individuals; thus enhancing initiate empowerment. As a result, individuals commonly choose among multiple neighborhoods for their various

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<sup>25</sup> Lloyd Sandelands, *Feeling and Form in Social Life* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1998), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=vfW\\_sXRsq5cC&printsec=frontcover&dq=feeling+and+form+in+social+life&hl=en&ei=zbt0TcCaFZOo0AGK9sTrDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=vfW_sXRsq5cC&printsec=frontcover&dq=feeling+and+form+in+social+life&hl=en&ei=zbt0TcCaFZOo0AGK9sTrDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 67.

<sup>26</sup> Harry Triandis, *Individualism and Collectivism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=luUj8miPuIIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=individualism+and+collectivism&hl=en&ei=\\_730TdzXO6T20gGah6ntDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=4&ved=0CD0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=individualism%20and%20collectivism&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=luUj8miPuIIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=individualism+and+collectivism&hl=en&ei=_730TdzXO6T20gGah6ntDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4&ved=0CD0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=individualism%20and%20collectivism&f=false), 6.

<sup>27</sup> Chris Shore, "Community," in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Modern Social Thought*, ed. William Outhwaite (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=N92gOkqu6kAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=blackwell+dictionary+of+modern+social+thought&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=tsD0TcH5CoKy0AGs5ODsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=N92gOkqu6kAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=blackwell+dictionary+of+modern+social+thought&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=tsD0TcH5CoKy0AGs5ODsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 101.

<sup>28</sup> Tracie Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject: Ethics and Sexuality in Central Europe, 1890-1930* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2008), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=3mRsl1GwHhEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=reforming+the+moral+subject&hl=en&ei=xMH0Taz6CbCz0AHDsdXsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=3mRsl1GwHhEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=reforming+the+moral+subject&hl=en&ei=xMH0Taz6CbCz0AHDsdXsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 52.



shopping, dining, and service needs. It is also common for individuals to move frequently into different homes in various neighborhoods in order to realize their desires for a certain kind of house or other amenity.<sup>29</sup> With this consistent mobility, friendships may extend to twenty or thirty miles away, while individuals may not even know their immediate neighbors.<sup>30</sup> Thus a sense of community identity among initiates often surrenders to an individualistic sense of identity constructed primarily around preferences and empowered choice in this context. More about this form of organization is outlined in the final chapter.

### ***Empowerment and Minneapolis Demographics***

In addition to community organization, the dissonance and evolution process related to individual empowerment is made clearer when also connected to broader quantitative demographics of the western suburbs of Minneapolis. The ability of initiates to move among various cities and suburbs and construct an individual sense of identity is made possible by the financial realities of the people involved. The city and surrounding area comprises approximately 3,200,000 people, and the western suburbs of Minneapolis are its wealthiest area.<sup>31</sup> Known as the “Lake District” for its proximity to the nationally known city lakes, the western suburbs are home to some of the wealthiest businesspeople and “old money” in the state of Minnesota.<sup>32</sup> There is internal variation, but most in this area are wealthy, educated and experience high levels of agency and empowerment. The following pictures and graph

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<sup>29</sup> My family and I have lived in three different homes over the course of twelve years – a figure common among our various relationships.

<sup>30</sup> Our closest friends live ten miles away in an entirely different neighborhood. We have additional friendships that extend past twenty miles. We do not attend a church in a community, and I work over twenty miles away from the university. We do not know the names of the people in three of the houses that are immediately next door. This fragmentation appears to be normative among the initiates in the churches as well, as we shall see in later chapters.

<sup>31</sup> Brett Stursa, “School Districts of the Rich and Famous,” *City Pages*, 22 September 2004, <http://www.citypages.com/2004-09-22/news/school-districts-of-the-rich-and-famous/>. The article describes how parents in the western suburbs have the personal wealth necessary to keep schools running properly as compared with other areas of the city.

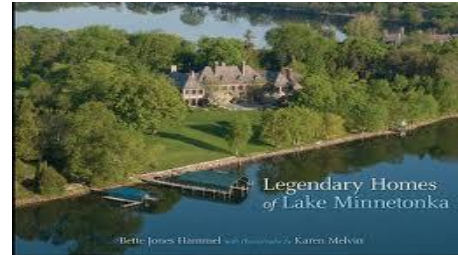
<sup>32</sup> “Lake Minnetonka, Minnesota, USA,” <http://www.lakelubbers.com/lake-minnetonka-492/>. This website provides one example of how the “Lake District” is viewed on a national level. One of the cities in the fieldwork, Edina, is regularly featured in the New York Times crossword puzzle as a famous American city with wealthy people.

provide a general sense of the type of individual attending many of these churches. One of the lead church pastors I interviewed described the challenges of what it is like be a lead pastor in a church with billionaires who have the wealth and connections to “make things happen.”

**FIGURE ONE: Sample Pictures of Minneapolis and the Western Suburbs**



**View of downtown Minneapolis**



**Example of mansion on Lake Minnetonka in western suburbs**



**Typical \$350,000 home in western suburban neighborhoods.**



**This area is home to the largest shopping mall in the U.S., the Mall of America.**

**FIGURE TWO: Demographics of Five Principle Cities in the Fieldwork**

City	White Ethnicity	Median Income	% High School Graduate	% College Graduate	Median Home Value	% Single Driver to Work <sup>33</sup>	Avg. Drive Time <sup>34</sup>
Minnetonka	94.4%	\$105,201	95.9	51.6	\$290,000	83.3%	21 min
Wayzata	96.1%	\$96,8859	96.5	41	\$397,900	n/a	23 min
Eden Prairie <sup>35</sup>	90.7%	\$123,466	97.2	57	\$305,242	n/a	21 min
Edina	96.1%	\$66,019	98	71	\$323,200	n/a	21 min

<sup>33</sup> Reflects high degree of automobile ownership in this part of Minneapolis. Cars are significant sources of empowerment and mobility. Only Minnetonka’s statistics were available, but given the parallels across the cities, it is reasonable to expect similar percentages.

<sup>34</sup> The relevance of this statistic becomes apparent later in the discussion on *Gesellschaft* forms of community organization that are disconnected and in which individuals may live far away from the locations in which they work, shop, and visit friends.

<sup>35</sup> Was voted top United States city in which to live in 2010. Plymouth, another city in the study, was voted top U.S. city in 2008. The criteria for such choices often related to amenities and possibility of choices from which individuals can choose.

In these cities, it is common for individuals to move among various relational environments according to preferences and affiliation. “Destination Dining” is a popular form of entertainment among those with means who may travel 100 miles or more on a single day because they want to eat various ethnic foods and/or participate in unique social experiences.<sup>36</sup> As was evident in the above table, drive time to one’s job can mean an individual lives twenty or more miles from their work because they are choosing the kind of city in which they want to live.<sup>37</sup> Dining and working at distance is paralleled by driving to worship. One local church mapped members along with a survey to determine where the constituency lived and why they were coming to church.<sup>38</sup> The results revealed members lived up to *sixty* miles away from the church, and the vast majority was coming because they liked the sermons of the lead pastor and/or the style of music for worship. They could have attended any number of churches according to their preference, and few indicated they were coming to be part of a community. Such practice is not unusual, indeed one billboard advertisement on the local freeway showed a large picture of a church with the slogan, “A church alive is worth the drive.” The church was trying to recruit people to drive at least forty miles because it was worth going to a “vibrant” church.

When these points are connected to the primary data of the interviews, surveys, and quantitative research in the ensuing seven chapters of this thesis, a pattern of dissonance and evolution emerges among the Catholic churches in the western suburban context of Minneapolis related to a lack of incorporation in a context of highly empowered individuals.

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<sup>36</sup> Timothy Gihring and others, “Destination Dining,” *Minnesota Monthly*, July 2006, <http://www.minnesotamonthly.com/media/Minnesota-Monthly/July-2006/Destination-Dining/>. This article is an example of restaurant choices to which people can travel.

<sup>37</sup> My family, for example, chose to live in Hopkins, MN because it has an interesting downtown area, yet is twenty miles to my workplace. This is of our neighbors as well, whom we do not see or talk to more than once every few weeks. We are all connected in various communities outside of our neighborhood context.

<sup>38</sup> The church did this process as it was preparing to move from a temporary facility to a permanent one. It was attempting to determine the location of its primary constituency as a means of deciding the plot of land to purchase.

## *Chapter Outline*

As the content of a fieldwork-based dissertation is inductive and data-dependent, the pattern of dissonance and evolution that emerged from the research determined the content and flow for the ensuing seven chapters. Chapter one details the origin and meaning of the Catholic sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. More importantly, this chapter establishes a long-standing pattern of dissonance and evolution that transcends the current Minneapolis context and seems to be, in fact, intrinsic to rituals as institution and individual engage with one another. Following this general information, the chapter highlights four specific eras in the church in which the initiation process experienced significant dissonance and obvious evolution – such as when the Eucharist was moved to a Sunday liturgy because participants were getting drunk at the evening meal, and when baptism and confirmation became two distinct rituals because of the spread of Christianity and the influence of Augustinian theology in regards to Original Sin. In each case, as well as two additional eras, the pattern of dissonance and evolution is developed and connected to the current fieldwork in Minneapolis.

Chapter two picks up the theme of dissonance as related to the lack of incorporation post-initiation in the Minneapolis context, established by surveying key figures in sociological inquiry who have written on initiation. Each figure assumes incorporation as an intrinsic dimension to the initiation process – a concept without which initiation collapses – and consideration is given to Van Gennep, Turner, and Bell among others. The main point is to show that Catholic churches in the fieldwork are experiencing dissonance because of the high rates of attrition, and that this challenges not only the sacramental order but also some key assumptions about ritual in sociological theory.

The third chapter marks the transition to the fieldwork context and discusses the methodology for data gathering in detail. The main focus revolves around questions of

validity in qualitative inquiry including strategies for addressing some of the main issues such as length of time spent in context, insider/outsider status, researcher bias, and the limitations of specific data gathering methods. While not exhaustive in detail, this chapter establishes the main parameters within which the two years of research were conducted.

The fourth and fifth chapters describe the fieldwork in detail. The first of these two chapters provides a narrative of the first year of research, interweaving the contextual dynamics that eventually led to a shift in research focus. Here we see a pattern of difficulty in finding past initiates across four separate parishes. The succeeding chapter describes the second year of research and evolution of the inquiry, and focuses primarily on the data gathered in the interview process as well as the survey conducted at a local university. The data is distilled from the two years of research in such a way as to highlight some of the main sociological dynamics involved in initiation as related to empowerment and fragmentation of community. Here we see common threads among all the churches related to causation of the high rates of initiate attrition.

The sixth chapter then analyzes this data by asking two main questions: is the data relevant to the issue of confirmation and does it apply beyond the specific context; and is it valid in the sense that initiates could be attending other churches or returning to church later in life – in which case the claim of dissonance is minimized or rendered moot. As to the former question, data is presented from seven different Protestant churches in the area as well as the interviews from church officials outside the community. In each case, the rates of attrition persist in contexts beyond the Catholic churches, suggesting there are broader sociological dynamics involved. As to the latter, quantitative research conducted concurrently with this fieldwork reveals rates of attrition are increasing around the United States and people are *not* returning to the church later in life.

The final chapter then transitions from describing and analyzing the dissonance to evaluating a possible trajectory of evolution in the initiation rituals in this Minneapolis context. Though the work is, as has been said, somewhat speculative because the evolution is still in process, we can nonetheless see hints of it in how churches are offering to personalize the initiation process for potential catechumens. This development makes sense in a context where initiates are highly empowered agents who move among fragmented communities according to their preferences. This chapter considers concepts such as community, agency, structure, and empowerment in an effort to describe the average initiate in this context and the possible outcome of the current situation.

With this as a description for the flow of the argument, attention can first be turned to initiation in Catholic history where we see the common pattern of dissonance and evolution as the church and individuals mutually negotiate expectations and practice.

## **SECTION ONE: *Initiation as a Ritual Process***

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### *Survey of Dissonance and Evolution in Catholic Initiation*

#### **I. Introduction**

As stated in the introduction, dissonance and evolution are part of a long-standing pattern in Catholic initiation, as in other aspects of church life, which occurs as the competing sociological forces of Church and individual specifically negotiate the sacraments of initiation. As one of the confirmation directors told me, “We do people a disservice when we teach them that Rome was ‘ever thus’” meaning nothing has ever changed.<sup>39</sup> As such, a look back through the history of initiation is helpful to demonstrate the pattern and show how it connects to and illuminates the current negotiation between ritual participant and institution. Additionally, surveying several moments in two thousand years of initiation history provides some perspective in that it reveals the institution of the church has been maintained in the midst of change, and is likely to survive similar tensions as church and culture continue to negotiate various “dissonance dialectics.” With this in mind, a review of some of these key moments in the history and practice of Christian initiation provides the focus for this chapter.

In making these connections between past and present, there are, of course, many settings from which to choose given 2,000 years of Christian initiation; any review is therefore fraught with the inevitable risk of excluding important moments. Given space constraints, however, four eras of Christian initiation are considered most germane to the discussion: the 2<sup>nd</sup> century when the church focused on establishing ritual orthodoxy; the 4<sup>th</sup> century in which Christianity was legalized and subsequently spread through the Roman Empire in rapid fashion; the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the conflict regarding confirmation in the Reformation/Counter-Reformation; and the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the councils of Vatican II. These eras were chosen, and will be discussed at some length below, because they both illustrate the

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<sup>39</sup> This comment came from ‘Mary Stockbridge’ is expanded upon significantly in chapter five.



pattern of dissonance and evolution and connect in some way to the initiation context of the fieldwork.

The survey that follows is split into two sections. Before outlining the specific circumstances of a chosen era, a first section is needed to explain, in general terms, the form, origin, and meaning of baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist. The second section describes the practice of these three rituals during the eras outlined above while highlighting the nature of the dissonance and evolution unique to each context. By the end of the chapter, this discussion sheds light on the meaning of the rituals observed, the reasons for the current institutional guidelines regarding their practice, and the tensions between Christian initiate and the Christian church. It also provides a foundation for the following chapter and the fieldwork presentation in which the current dissonance in the Minneapolis context is discussed as related to the lack of incorporation following ritual initiation.

## **II. Catholic Initiation: *Form and Origin of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist*** ***Baptism***

In the early church, as today, baptism is the first action of the ritual cycle that includes confirmation and Eucharist, and in its most basic terms, is constituted by a ritual washing in water. The etymology of “baptism” is derived from the Greek word *baptizo* meaning “to wash or immerse” – signifying that “laving is of the essential idea of the sacrament.”<sup>40</sup> The ritual process and form of the washing varies across contexts – from full submersion of adults in a river to the sprinkling of water over the foreheads of infants in a basilica – but in every case water immersion or water contact is necessary to the ritual.

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<sup>40</sup> William H. W. Fanning, “Baptism,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia. An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline and History of the Catholic Church; Volume Two*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann and others (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=w00sAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+catholic+encyclopedia+herbermann&hl=en&ei=nML0TZOTIurj0QGp9zrDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=w00sAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+catholic+encyclopedia+herbermann&hl=en&ei=nML0TZOTIurj0QGp9zrDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 259.

In early Christian practice, the purpose of the baptismal washing related to the purification *and* regeneration of the whole person.<sup>41</sup> In the waters of baptism there is both the cleansing from the effects of sin and a resulting change in status in which the “old” person becomes “new” – being “buried with Christ” in symbolic death under the waters before rising up out of the waters into newness of life.<sup>42</sup> Pope Benedict recently affirmed baptism as a “washing of regeneration,”<sup>43</sup> and the Catholic Catechism states initiates “are freed from sin (purification) and reborn as sons of God (regeneration); (becoming) members of Christ, incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission.”<sup>44</sup>

The inseparable nature of purification and regeneration is critical to the ritual as it is what makes the Christian washing different from its probable antecedents. Washing for the singular purpose of purification was a common practice in early Judaism where sacrificial animals were carefully washed by Levitical priests – even their innards – before being placed on the altar. Later in Jewish history in the courtyard of Solomon’s temple a 24,000 gallon laver was featured for full animal submersion and their purification before being sacrificed for sins.<sup>45</sup> On the annual Jewish Day of Atonement in which sacrifice was made on behalf of all the sins of Israel, the High Priest fully immersed himself to make sure he “did not enter

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<sup>41</sup> Bryan Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism. From the New Testament to the Council of Trent* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=JVV1IEHV6jkC&printsec=frontcover&dq=early+and+medieval+rituals&hl=en&ei=VsP0TcrJLXk0QGw94nuDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=JVV1IEHV6jkC&printsec=frontcover&dq=early+and+medieval+rituals&hl=en&ei=VsP0TcrJLXk0QGw94nuDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 133. It should be noted that the regeneration dimension was also connected to the work of the Spirit, both in baptism and in the confirmation “laying on of hands.” The regeneration is done by the Spirit and makes the empowerment given at confirmation possible.

<sup>42</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (London: Burns and Oats, 1994), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=cymM4xEM76wC&printsec=frontcover&dq=catechism+of+the+catholic+church&hl=en&ei=2sP0Tbb1BuPL0QGTmJzuDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=cymM4xEM76wC&printsec=frontcover&dq=catechism+of+the+catholic+church&hl=en&ei=2sP0Tbb1BuPL0QGTmJzuDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 277.

<sup>43</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, “Homily, Feast of the Baptism of the Lord,” 7 January 2007, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/b16baptLord07.htm>.

<sup>44</sup> *Catechism*, 277

<sup>45</sup> References drawn from Leviticus 1:9 which gives instructions as to how a priest is to wash a lamb, and from I Kings 7:23-26 which describes the design of the main sacrificial basin in the courtyard of Solomon’s temple.

the holy of holies with any dirt or uncleanness on his body.”<sup>46</sup> Purification was the common theme in all of these rituals, but there, in contrast to early Christian patterns, there is no additional sense of regeneration in Judaism:

If we separate the ritual of baptism into its two elements – ritual washing to forgive sins and transformation of the individual to receive God with consequent reception into the community – then it is reasonable that John (the Baptist) copied the ritual washing from elsewhere (other human purification rituals) for it was not a common Jewish practice.<sup>47</sup>

Purification rituals were also a common part of many non-Jewish religious patterns in the Mediterranean world.<sup>48</sup> Mystery religions such as Orphism and the Eleusinian Mysteries used water for purification as part of their initiatory preparation.<sup>49</sup> In Greek purifications rituals, “contact with water (was) fundamental.”<sup>50</sup> In ancient Egyptian religion, ritual bathing for cleansing was required when laity entered an Egyptian temple for contact with the gods.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> J.E. Hartly, “Atonement, Day Of,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David Baker (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=Ao5ecZ0ZsG8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=dictionary+of+the+old+testament&hl=en&ei=D8T0TdO4Buf10gHvrL3tDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Ao5ecZ0ZsG8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=dictionary+of+the+old+testament&hl=en&ei=D8T0TdO4Buf10gHvrL3tDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false), 56.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Gabriel, *Gods of our Fathers. The Memory of Egypt in Judaism and Christianity* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=n3x46NoDOcUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=gods+of+our+fathers&hl=en&ei=g8T0TbvNonZ0QH02YzuDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=n3x46NoDOcUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=gods+of+our+fathers&hl=en&ei=g8T0TbvNonZ0QH02YzuDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false), 184.

<sup>48</sup> Grant Allen, *The Evolution of the Idea of God* (London: Watts and Company, 1908), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=Pc5ZAAAAMAAJ&pg=frontcover&dq=the+evolution+of+our+idea+of+God&hl=en&ei=w8T0TbDYNOar0AHSqM3rDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=the%20evolution%20of%20our%20idea%20of%20God&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Pc5ZAAAAMAAJ&pg=frontcover&dq=the+evolution+of+our+idea+of+God&hl=en&ei=w8T0TbDYNOar0AHSqM3rDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=the%20evolution%20of%20our%20idea%20of%20God&f=false), 13. Allen writes about syncretism/borrowing in early Christianity in that “...our cult (Christianity) did actually manage to borrow them (notions of sacrifice, priesthood, etc.) ready-made from the great religions that went before it...”

<sup>49</sup> Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=xC9GAdUGX5sC&printsec=frontcover&dq=baptism+in+the+early+church&hl=en&src=bnr&ei=XcX0TfelNqWw0AHc8sHtDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=xC9GAdUGX5sC&printsec=frontcover&dq=baptism+in+the+early+church&hl=en&src=bnr&ei=XcX0TfelNqWw0AHc8sHtDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 29.

<sup>50</sup> Walter Burkert and John Raffan, *Greek Religion. Archaic and Classical* (Boston: Blackwell Publishing, 1985), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=ekqJUZHVtZsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=greek+religion+archaic+and+classical&hl=en&ei=oMX0TaOZL6rz0gHht53uDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=ekqJUZHVtZsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=greek+religion+archaic+and+classical&hl=en&ei=oMX0TaOZL6rz0gHht53uDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 76.

<sup>51</sup> Rosemary Clark, *The Sacred Magic of Ancient Egypt: The Spiritual Practice Restored* (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 2003), Google Books, <http://books.google.com/books?id=dbekMz1NYUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+sacred+magic+of+ancient+>

Given such parallels, it seems likely the origins of water purification within Christian baptism were at least shared, if not borrowed, from both its Jewish history and from many of the additional religious patterns of the surrounding 1<sup>st</sup> century world. The fusion of purification and regeneration, by contrast, was more unique to the Christian pattern. Justin Martyr emphasizes the importance of regeneration for all people in one of the earliest descriptions of baptism,

Then they (new initiates) are led by us to where there is water, and in the manner of the regeneration by which we ourselves were regenerated, they are regenerated....(and as we) have existed in bad habits and evil conduct...(we) might obtain the forgiveness of sins.<sup>52</sup>

Baptism, therefore, forms the first link in the ecclesial initiation chain, and though its expression may vary according to context, the meaning has generally remained the same. Both the adults in the river of a first century Easter vigil and the infants in the early basilicas and modern parishes were purified and regenerated both to receive the candidate into the family of the church and thus ensure the possibility of their salvation, and to lay the essential foundation for the next and immediate action in the initiation process, at least for the first several centuries, the reception of the Holy Spirit in confirmation.

### ***Confirmation***

Better known in the early church as the “chrism,” the central feature of confirmation at that time was the conferring of the Holy Spirit in the “hearts” of the newly purified and regenerated initiate. This was effected through the “laying on of hands” by the bishop, enabling the Holy Spirit to come and “reside in” the neophyte from that point onward. In the first century, the belief was that they would be strengthened to “walk in the light” – a belief which evolved in later rituals in the Roman Catholic pattern to being “enriched with a special

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egypt&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=Isn0TdYUBcLY0QHw0oTsDA&sa=X&oi=book\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false, 144.

<sup>52</sup> Ferguson, *Baptism*, 238.

strength, more perfectly bound to the Church, and as true witnesses to Christ, obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed.”<sup>53</sup> In either case, confirmation is meant to be a singular moment where the divine-human relationship is established to empower the new Christian.

The particular sequence of confirmation following baptism is an important feature in the process – particularly the immediacy of it in which the early church most often confirmed initiates while they were still in the baptismal waters. This temporal proximity of the two rituals is why the early church refers to them as a singular ritual with two parts – to the point that some early writers on Christian initiation do not specifically refer to a segment of “confirmation” since it was assumed to take place right after baptism. The two were closely linked – at least in the early forms of initiation and still in all Orthodox churches.<sup>54</sup>

However, despite this temporal proximity, there is significant biblical and extra-biblical evidence which suggests they were expected to be two unique events. New Testament documents indicate stories in which believers did not receive the Spirit at their baptism (Acts 8), as well as other instances in which people were recognized to have the Spirit before their baptism (Acts 10). Extra-biblically, the early church fathers recognized their separate functions. In translating the writings of Origen, Everett Ferguson writes:

Receiving the Holy Spirit was also closely linked to baptism.....The way in which Origen speaks, bringing the possession of the Spirit into his references on baptism even when his main concern is another subject, shows how natural the connection was in his mind. Nevertheless, the connection was not automatic. In addressing both catechumens and the faithful, Origen observed that there were those washed in water but not at the same time in the Holy Spirit and catechumens who were not strangers to the Holy Spirit.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 326. This is one example of ritual evolution and will be further detailed at the end of this section.

<sup>54</sup> Though variations in process may have occurred at a local level, it is not until later in Roman Catholic history that the two sacraments were definitively split.

<sup>55</sup> Ferguson, *Baptism*, 412.

Therefore the unique dimension of confirmation vis-à-vis baptism was the inauguration of a divine-human partnership in which the initiate is continually being “enriched with special strength” as they live out daily union with the divine.<sup>56</sup> This is a one-time event in which the person is formally and permanently joined together with the divine. The initiate is “sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit” with the “anointing of the sacred chrism.” and is made “the temple of the Holy Spirit” through the laying on of hands.<sup>57</sup>

Similar to baptism, theological notions and, to an extent, ritual practice of confirmation confirmed a tie between the divine and the recipient that had antecedents in the Jewish tradition. Old Testament narratives chronicle several moments in which the Holy Spirit empowers or inhabits an individual. Moses receives the Spirit of the Lord to confront Pharaoh; Joshua takes the Promised Land after Moses lays hands on him; Samson is anointed by the Spirit to battle Philistine rivals. However, in contrast to early Christian notions, this Spirit empowerment among Jews was temporary and occurred primarily among, and for, the more prominent biblical characters. The Spirit was not accessible to just anyone, there was no permanent union, and the lay-person did not commonly receive the Spirit through an ordered ritual ceremony. The Spirit was exclusive to the leaders of the nation for specific reasons.

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<sup>56</sup> Peter Kreeft, *Catholic Christianity: A Complete Catechism of Catholic Beliefs Based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: St. Ignatius Press, 2001), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=VZxgfJkNNgC&pg=frontcover&dq=confirmation+as+enriched+with+a+special+strength&hl=en&ei=Qsr0TcCVJsKs0AHswZTsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=confirmation%20as%20enriched%20with%20a%20special%20strength&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=VZxgfJkNNgC&pg=frontcover&dq=confirmation+as+enriched+with+a+special+strength&hl=en&ei=Qsr0TcCVJsKs0AHswZTsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=confirmation%20as%20enriched%20with%20a%20special%20strength&f=false), 316. In later eras, when Confirmation was split from baptism, the Roman church revised its theology to include a sense of Spirit-conferral at the moment of baptism so infants and new converts were not left without the Spirit. Additionally, see Romans chapters 7-8 for the early views in Christianity regarding the divine-human partnership of Spirit and person as well as Galatians 5 for the “fruit” or results of this partnership. In early Christian theology, it was assumed that followers of Jesus were marked by their eschatological relationship with the Spirit.

<sup>57</sup> Gregory L. Klein and Robert A. Wolfe, *Pastoral Foundations of the Sacraments: A Catholic Perspective* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1998), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=AEpDnZny1noC&pg=frontcover&dq=sealed+with+the+mark+of+the+spirit+through+the+laying+on+of+hands&hl=en&ei=Zcz0TfGAers0gGuzbDtDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=8&ved=0CEoQ6AEwBw#v=onepage&q=sealed%20with%20the%20mark%20of%20the%20spirit%20through%20the%20laying%20on%20of%20hands&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=AEpDnZny1noC&pg=frontcover&dq=sealed+with+the+mark+of+the+spirit+through+the+laying+on+of+hands&hl=en&ei=Zcz0TfGAers0gGuzbDtDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=8&ved=0CEoQ6AEwBw#v=onepage&q=sealed%20with%20the%20mark%20of%20the%20spirit%20through%20the%20laying%20on%20of%20hands&f=false), 50.

Early Christians, by contrast, claimed God's Spirit was now accessible to *all* people as various prophets had predicted in their messianic pronouncements. Peter, at Pentecost in Acts 2 for example, refers to the prophecies of Joel to explain the phenomena of tongues that had burst out. He claimed it was the promised season when God will "pour out his Spirit on all flesh." This is one of the key turning points between the Jews and early Christians as Christians argued the presence of God was no longer confined to the Holy of Holies in a centralized Temple or in the special anointing of a leader. Instead, because the death of Jesus provided a perpetual sacrifice of atonement, the veil in the temple separating God from the people was torn in two and the Holy Spirit moved out among the people, first at Pentecost, and then through the laying on of hands.<sup>58</sup> After Pentecost, the post-baptismal "laying on of hands," whenever this was done, became the key moment at which the new divine-human relationship and initiate's status is "confirmed."

As to the form of the ritual, the laying on of hands among Christians also figured in Judaism where it was a common gesture in the Old Testament identified with either offerings of sacrifice, the imparting of a blessing, or divine encounter.<sup>59</sup> A particular form of hand-laying, rendered *sim* in the Hebrew and describing a gentle touch in which a vital force was exchanged, is particularly relevant for the confirmation ritual. This is the gesture of Elijah when he touched a dead child to restore him, or Jacob when passing on the blessing to Manasseh and Ephraim. The blessings and healings that passed through ones' hands in such

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<sup>58</sup> Gregory Higgins, *The Tapestry of Christian Theology; Modern Minds on the Biblical Narrative* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2003), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=FiqFna3CuX8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+tapestry+of+christian+theology&hl=en&ei=pM70TerSEYTy0gGIXanuDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=FiqFna3CuX8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+tapestry+of+christian+theology&hl=en&ei=pM70TerSEYTy0gGIXanuDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 159.

<sup>59</sup> George Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1973), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=T6Yq9bEMLd4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=baptism+in+the+new+testament&hl=en&ei=2870TbXoLqbu0gGqzZnsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=T6Yq9bEMLd4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=baptism+in+the+new+testament&hl=en&ei=2870TbXoLqbu0gGqzZnsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 122.

instances were not merely symbolic, but created an efficacious gift for the individual participating in the ritual:

The idea no doubt was that, by placing your hands on a person (in *sim*) some magic attaching to them took effect on him. Maybe at a later stage your hands were conceived of as transmitting an influence from above, one might almost say, like conductors.<sup>60</sup>

It seems probable, therefore, that *sim* would have been a precursor to transmitting the Spirit – an influence from above – through the hands of the official to the new initiate in early church Confirmation. It was a gentle touch that provided an efficacious moment of divine-human intersection, indelibly altering the confirmands' relationship with God. With the Spirit, they are no longer what they were, but instead now stand on the cusp of what they are meant to become – a full member of the Body of Christ. The final step, then, in the early church's three-part initiation process was to commune with fellow Christians in the sharing of the Eucharist.

### ***Eucharist***

With the meta-physical change and divine-human partnership established in baptism and confirmation, initiates participated in the final action of the three-fold ritual where they were invited by the community to share in the "communion" meal of the Eucharist. Derived from the Greek, *eucharistia*, usually translated as "gratefulness," the primary purpose of the meal is to celebrate the mysteries of God as made manifest in the regeneration of baptism and Spirit-empowering of Confirmation.<sup>61</sup> It is a meal about which John Chrysostom wrote, "The awful mysteries which are celebrated at every communion are called Eucharist, because

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> David L. Jeffery and I. Howard Marshall, "Eucharist," in *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, ed. David L. Jeffery (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=7R0IGTSvIVIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=A+Dictionary+of+Biblical+Tradition+in+English+Literature&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=SdH0TfHQNank0QHst9nuDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=7R0IGTSvIVIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=A+Dictionary+of+Biblical+Tradition+in+English+Literature&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=SdH0TfHQNank0QHst9nuDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 245. "Eucharist" is not found in the New Testament documents. It was a name given to the meal by the early church.



they are the commemoration of the many benefits, and by all means they work on us to be grateful.”<sup>62</sup>

The form and meaning of the meal revolved around the consuming of bread and wine – a ritual instituted at the Last Supper in which Jesus raised a loaf of bread and chalice of wine while claiming these two elements were symbols for his body that would be broken and his blood that would be shed for the remission of sins. Jesus here hearkened back to the Jewish Passover event with this claim, and presented himself as a metaphorical lamb to be the final, atoning sacrifice for sin.<sup>63</sup> This sacrifice would inaugurate a new covenant that allowed for the purification, regeneration, and divine-human partnership celebrated in baptism and confirmation – a covenant to be celebrated in the Eucharist. To participate in the Eucharist meant, therefore, that one fully completed their initiation into the Christian community.

Jesus further defined the significance of the ritual when he told his followers to partake of this meal “in remembrance of him.” While many current Protestant strains of Christianity celebrate communion as mere symbol, the original Jewish concept of “remembrance” suggested Jesus may have meant something beyond a merely physical representation of a spiritual reality. To “remember” in the Jewish tradition transcended symbol or recollection, and penetrated into matters of the heart and core of a person’s being

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<sup>62</sup> *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Eucharist,” Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=6SaalkfxgkAC&pg=PA651&lpg=PA651&dq=The+awful+mysteries+which+are+celebrated+at+every+communion+are+called+Eucharist,+because+they+are+the+commemoration+of+the+many+benefits,+and+by+all+means+they+work+on+us+to+be+grateful&source=bl&ots=tRBtXlItKi&sig=QD o6KGEeuPalyvXf6ZQ41K1Frc4&hl=en&ei=R9L0TbW8Mqyy0AHm74DrDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&resnum=1&ved=0CBYQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=6SaalkfxgkAC&pg=PA651&lpg=PA651&dq=The+awful+mysteries+which+are+celebrated+at+every+communion+are+called+Eucharist,+because+they+are+the+commemoration+of+the+many+benefits,+and+by+all+means+they+work+on+us+to+be+grateful&source=bl&ots=tRBtXlItKi&sig=QD o6KGEeuPalyvXf6ZQ41K1Frc4&hl=en&ei=R9L0TbW8Mqyy0AHm74DrDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ved=0CBYQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>63</sup> The importance of this phrase or idea is indicated by the fact that all four canonical Gospel writers describe this event. Jesus is referring back to the Exodus events – in particular to the final of the Ten Plagues Yahweh sent upon Egypt. In order to avoid this plague of the “Angel of Death” the Hebrews were instructed to sacrifice a lamb and spread its blood on their doorposts as a symbol that they were “covered by the blood” and the Angel should not enter – rather it should “pass over” their homes.

in which the past is called back into the present in a mysterious way, being ‘put back together’ or ‘re-membered.’<sup>64</sup>

This form of “remembering” continued into first century Christian thought and practice as evidenced in the biblical witness of I Corinthians 11:24 and Luke 22:19 which describes remembering as a “calling to mind” – a phrase derived from the Greek work *anamnesis*.<sup>65</sup> Consistent with its Jewish origin, *anamnesis* refers to the kind of “calling to mind” in which Christians move beyond “an act of human remembering” and into the place where the efficacy of the death and resurrection of Jesus becomes a present reality.<sup>66</sup> The Eucharistic association with remembrance was, therefore, not meant as a mental imaging of the past (which it may be), but a holistic experience in the present that encompasses mind, body, and heart. In this way, *anamnesis* is “central to the Eucharistic prayer” as clergy and participants invite the real presence of Jesus into the ritual.<sup>67</sup> This theological view of early Christians continues in various theological forms among many Christian patterns today, including that of Catholic theology.

For the early church, this fact had two important implications as they celebrated together. Firstly, this meant that Jesus was actually present in some mysterious way in the

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<sup>64</sup> Yeschayahu Leibowitz and Eliezer Goldman, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State* (Cambridge: President and Fellows of Harvard University, 1992), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=mWBUgEO4sUsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=judaism+human+values+and+the+jewish+state&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=o9L0TcueIYWt0AGf9NDtDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=mWBUgEO4sUsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=judaism+human+values+and+the+jewish+state&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=o9L0TcueIYWt0AGf9NDtDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 45.

<sup>65</sup> Berard L. Marthaler, *The Creed: An Apostolic Faith in Contemporary Theology* (New London: Twenty-Third Publications, 2007), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=c9NFb1TlfX0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+creed+an+apostolic&hl=en&ei=Ptb0TdDkKqjk0QGimLTuDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=The%20creed%20an%20apostolic&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=c9NFb1TlfX0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+creed+an+apostolic&hl=en&ei=Ptb0TdDkKqjk0QGimLTuDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=The%20creed%20an%20apostolic&f=false), 153.

<sup>66</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology Volume 3* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=LA6Yoa6sPWkC&pg=frontcover&dq=pannenberg+and+anamnesis&hl=en&ei=OtD0TbmHEKPf0QHS5Nm5Cw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=LA6Yoa6sPWkC&pg=frontcover&dq=pannenberg+and+anamnesis&hl=en&ei=OtD0TbmHEKPf0QHS5Nm5Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 306.

<sup>67</sup> Kevin W. Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2005), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=s5IXdjPhT1AC&printsec=frontcover&dq=models+of+the+eucharist&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=qNb0TdbVAcHl0QGczNTtDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=s5IXdjPhT1AC&printsec=frontcover&dq=models+of+the+eucharist&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=qNb0TdbVAcHl0QGczNTtDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 132.

bread and wine and altered their very constitution with his own substance. Later Catholic theology called this metaphysical change, “transubstantiation,” in which the “perceptible qualities (of the bread and wine) were unchanged before and after its consecration, but its ‘substance’ or essence was ‘transformed’ into the body of Christ through a miracle that could not be observed in any physical sense.”<sup>68</sup> The consuming of the bread and wine, therefore, meant that one was partaking of Jesus in some mysterious sense – not in the way Realism would later describe it, in which infants were banned from the Eucharist because of the danger of dropping the bread – and thus Christ’s flesh – but still in some real way that was not mere symbol either.

Early Christian authors had a fairly robust sense of Jesus’ presence in the elements. St. Ignatius wanted to eat, “the Bread of God which is the Flesh of Christ.”<sup>69</sup> Justin Martyr believed the “flesh and blood” of early Christians was nourished by the “flesh and blood” of the incarnate Jesus.<sup>70</sup> Irenaeus declared, “the cup, a part of creation, to be his own Blood, from which he causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, he has established as his own Body, from which he gives increase to our bodies.”<sup>71</sup> And Clement of Alexandria wrote, “Jesus delivers over His Flesh, and pours out His Blood; and nothing is lacking for the growth of His children. O incredible mystery!”<sup>72</sup>

The second implication of the “remembrance” of the Eucharist table is that it is not just a completion of the initiation cycle, which it certainly is, but also an ongoing practice of faith. As such, unlike the one-time events of baptism and confirmation, the Eucharist meal

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<sup>68</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen Tucker, *The Oxford History of Christian Worship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=Si8axR7yC7wC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+oxford+history+of+christian+worship&hl=en&ei=ctf0TeDYD8fl0QG0cjqDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Si8axR7yC7wC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+oxford+history+of+christian+worship&hl=en&ei=ctf0TeDYD8fl0QG0cjqDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 234.

<sup>69</sup> “The Early Christians Believed in the Real Presence,” Real Presence Eucharistic Education and Adoration Association, [www.therealpresence.org/eucharst/father/a5.html](http://www.therealpresence.org/eucharst/father/a5.html).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

serves as a continual celebration of thanksgiving in which the Christian encounters Jesus and is “stamped in mystical experience” each time.<sup>73</sup> The Eucharist therefore becomes the central purpose for the ongoing gatherings of believers. Pope Benedict recently declared, “The Holy Eucharist, then, *brings Christian initiation to completion* and represents the center and goal of all sacramental life.”<sup>74</sup> When the initiate partakes for the first time, the Eucharist is for her or him both the end of the initiation process and the beginning of the journey of faith as a full member of the Christian community. The initiation is completed and the initiate is expected to continue being part of the community as oriented around the Eucharist table:

Baptism, for instance, lasts only as long as the baptismal action or ablution with water, and is, therefore, a transitory sacrament; on the contrary, the Eucharist, and the Eucharist alone, constitutes a permanent sacrament....<sup>75</sup>

These preceding paragraphs provide a general overview of the form, meaning, and origins of the Catholic sacraments of initiation. There are, of course, significance nuances beyond this description. However, the basic ideology remains that baptism and confirmation purify and ‘regenerate and inaugurate’ a human-divine relationship, and the Eucharist completes the initiation in the ongoing table of fellowship and gratefulness. Once this ritual cycle is completed, the initiate is considered part of the universal, Catholic Church in which, “though there are many nations there is but one people of God, which takes its citizens from

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<sup>73</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Worship with One Accord. Where Liturgy and Ecumenism Embrace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=88FE9ULGS\\_8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=worship+of+one+accord&hl=en&ei=GNn0TZ\\_xJIfb0QHvjLnsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=worship%20of%20one%20accord&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=88FE9ULGS_8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=worship+of+one+accord&hl=en&ei=GNn0TZ_xJIfb0QHvjLnsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=worship%20of%20one%20accord&f=false), 176.

<sup>74</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, “The Eucharist and Christian Initiation,” American Catholic Press. [http://www.americancatholicpress.org/Pope\\_Benedict\\_XVI\\_Eucharist\\_and\\_Christian\\_Initiation.html](http://www.americancatholicpress.org/Pope_Benedict_XVI_Eucharist_and_Christian_Initiation.html). *Italics mine.*

<sup>75</sup> J. Pohle, “Eucharist,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia. An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline and History of the Catholic Church; Volume V*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann and others (New York: Robert Appleton and Company, 1909), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=v7RAAQAAIAAJ&pg=frontcover&dq=catholic+encyclopedia+volume+5&hl=en&ei=Ktz0TaEg4rLQAe7NesM&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=catholic%20encyclopedia%20volume%205&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=v7RAAQAAIAAJ&pg=frontcover&dq=catholic+encyclopedia+volume+5&hl=en&ei=Ktz0TaEg4rLQAe7NesM&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=catholic%20encyclopedia%20volume%205&f=false), 581.

every race, making them citizens of a kingdom which is of a heavenly rather than of an earthly nature.”<sup>76</sup>

This description presents the basis of the initiation sacraments – at least as they were commonly conceived in the Early Church. As alluded to above, however, this three-fold sacramental process of initiation does not take place in a sociological vacuum. Disparities have long been a source of contention within the church as expectations collide with the realities of the laity in localized expressions of the Church. The result of these contentions and collisions can be a significant dissonance between stated ideology and ritual practice as leaders argue and participants negotiate their initiation amidst the variables of their unique sociological environments. Such arguments and variables often add significant complexity to the ritual process and sometimes even force an evolution of form or process of the sacraments due to their situations.

In the context of this thesis, the dissonance may underlie, or at least be reflected in, the disappearance of current confirmands from their local parishes; however, such differences between ideology and practice are simply a further example of a long-standing pattern. In order to demonstrate the deep-seated nature of the problem, and its regular occurrence over the centuries, the second half of this chapter describes both the form of the ritual and the dissonance/evolution pattern in different eras. This will enable the reader to see the issue is not related (or not just related) to ‘secularization’ or ‘modernity’ but rather to the relations between the institution of the church, the people, and the social context in different times and places. Such a step is necessary in order to see Minneapolis’s dynamics as part of a well-established pattern.

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<sup>76</sup> Pope Paul VI, “Dogmatic Constitution of the Church,” November 1964, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html).

### III. Dissonance and Evolution in Four Eras

#### A. The Early Church (*circa AD 40-AD 320*)

This first era of initiation began amid intense persecution prompting novices to engage in two or three years of instruction in Christian tradition before their initiation in order to ensure their behavior was consistent with the expectations of the church.<sup>77</sup> Their catechesis revolved around instruction in morality such as we find in the *Didache*, such as the taking of life in any form being strictly prohibited and sexual expression limited to marriage.<sup>78</sup> Initiates were also expected to avoid the theater, use money wisely, care for widows and orphans, and pray and fast regularly.<sup>79</sup> Justin Martyr describes the solemn moral nature of the preparation for those who claim to believe:

As many as are persuaded and believe that our doctrines are true, and promise that they can live accordingly, are taught to pray, and, while fasting, to ask from God forgiveness of past sins; and we pray and fast with them. . . . Those who, by water and faith, and the cross, are prepared, and repent of the sins they have committed, will escape the coming judgment of God.<sup>80</sup>

When this intense period of instruction ended, initiates deemed ready and of sound doctrine transitioned from catechetical instruction to the final stages of preparation for the

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<sup>77</sup> Maxwell Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Interpretation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville: Order of St. Benedict, 1999), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=otQeg8-xSIEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+rites+of+christian+interpretation&hl=en&ei=cfD0TbDAMeLo0QHcl\\_nrDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=otQeg8-xSIEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+rites+of+christian+interpretation&hl=en&ei=cfD0TbDAMeLo0QHcl_nrDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 118. This practice was critical in an age of both Roman persecution and Christian heresy. The Church was developing amidst these two critical factors that were pushed it in two directions. There was a wide variance of theological ideas as well as the constant threat of martyrdom: intense “catechism” focusing on instruction and behavior was therefore deemed necessary.

<sup>78</sup> Cyril Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=IneVgVvlizwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=early+christian+fathers&hl=en&ei=v\\_D0TZGwHufV0QHdw8zuDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=IneVgVvlizwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=early+christian+fathers&hl=en&ei=v_D0TZGwHufV0QHdw8zuDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 162.

<sup>79</sup> Stuart Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans and Company, 1991), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=TLyjrU3LPIUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=doctrine+and+practice+in+the+early+church&hl=en&ei=cvL0TY6sDoSy0AGsv7XrDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=TLyjrU3LPIUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=doctrine+and+practice+in+the+early+church&hl=en&ei=cvL0TY6sDoSy0AGsv7XrDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 17.

<sup>80</sup> Charles Semisch, *Justin Martyr: His Life, Writings, and Opinions*, trans. J.E. Ryland (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1843), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=SKECAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Justin+Martyr:+His+Life,+Writings,+and+Opinions&hl=en&ei=xfL0TffxMYau0AGkmeztDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=SKECAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Justin+Martyr:+His+Life,+Writings,+and+Opinions&hl=en&ei=xfL0TffxMYau0AGkmeztDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false), 333.

initiation ritual. Here the catechumens began a final day of preparation, typically during Easter Vigil, in which they renounced the works of Satan and fasted throughout the day before retiring to bed. As the sun rose the next morning, the catechumens woke and faced to the west – the place of sunset and darkness – where they opened up their arms and hands to denounce Satan one final time. Then, turning towards the east to face the sun and the light (symbolizing their conversion from darkness to light) they shouted their commitment to Christ, disrobed, and prepared to enter the waters of baptism to begin their initiation.<sup>81</sup>

Cyril of Jerusalem stressed the importance of this disrobing as symbolic of Christ's nakedness on the cross as well as the nakedness of Adam in the Garden of Eden – a return to an innocent state.<sup>82</sup> Thus this seeming lack of modesty simply symbolized the purity and regeneration of the initiate as she or he prepared to join the Christian community.<sup>83</sup> As outlined earlier, the movement of old-to-new is fundamental in a context where Christianity and its moral codes were diametrically opposed to the surrounding Roman culture at that time – especially as people were coming to Christianity from various religious patterns that may not have been monotheistic or shared the same moral values in terms of sexuality, finances,

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<sup>81</sup> Laurie Delgatto and others, *Confirmed in a Faithful Community* (Winona: St. Mary's Press, 2006), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=KRYxTChm864C&printsec=frontcover&dq=confirmed+in+a+faithful+community&hl=en&ei=Qvb0Te6dG\\_Kt0AGNrd3tDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CDwQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=KRYxTChm864C&printsec=frontcover&dq=confirmed+in+a+faithful+community&hl=en&ei=Qvb0Te6dG_Kt0AGNrd3tDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CDwQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false), 7. In a recent homily, Pope Benedict describes the pervasiveness of this “west-to-east” symbolism in the early church even during the normal weekly church services where, “There was (an ongoing) custom whereby the Bishop or the priest, after the homily, would cry out to the faithful: “Conversi ad Dominum” – turn now towards the Lord. This meant in the first place that they would turn towards the East, towards the rising sun, the sign of Christ returning, whom we go to meet when we celebrate the Eucharist.” Therefore, the initiation ritual paralleled common church practice, and thus prepared, the initiates entered into the next stage of the ritual: the waters of Baptism.

<sup>82</sup> Laurie Guy, *Introducing Early Christianity. A Topical Survey of its Life, Beliefs, and Practices* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2004), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=2WnBcd14XakC&printsec=frontcover&dq=introducing+early+christianity&hl=en&ei=\\_fb0TZXBnqLd0QHnfnsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=2WnBcd14XakC&printsec=frontcover&dq=introducing+early+christianity&hl=en&ei=_fb0TZXBnqLd0QHnfnsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 221.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

and social relations. Many of these behaviors were considered part of the “old” nature as outlined by Paul in his various letters.<sup>84</sup>

### ***Early Church Baptism***

The core of the baptismal dimension centered around three questions asked of each catechumen:

1. “Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty?”
2. “Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was born by the Holy Spirit of Virgin Mary, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and was dead and buried, and rose again on the third day, alive from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and sat at the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead?”
3. “Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, in the holy Church, and in the resurrection of the flesh?”<sup>85</sup>

After giving a positive response to each question the initiate was plunged under the waters. With their faith and doctrine sure, the initiates rose up out of the waters for the final time after the final question, and were considered purified, regenerated and now ready for the next distinctive moment in the ritual – the conferring of the Spirit at Confirmation.

### ***Early Church Confirmation***

While there were differences in the anointing process in early history, the pattern that would become distinctly part of the Roman Catholic tradition is the focus here as it is foundational for current practice. Within this pattern officiates practiced pre-baptismal and post-baptismal anointing – the former to seal the renunciation of Satan the darkness, the latter to confer the Holy Spirit on the newly baptized.<sup>86</sup> Upon rising out of the water, therefore, the presbyter made a sign of the cross with oil on the forehead of the newly baptized while

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<sup>84</sup> See the “vice lists” of Galatians 5 for an example of behaviors considered to be part of the “old” way of life.

<sup>85</sup> Hall, *Doctrine*, 20.

<sup>86</sup> Guy, *Introducing Christianity*, 221. In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, only pre-baptismal anointing was practiced as it was believed the Holy Spirit was also imparted during the moment of baptism. This is a significant difference from the Roman pattern in which there was a pre-baptismal anointing to prepare for the baptism as well as the anointing related to the conferral of the Spirit as a separate ritual. As the Confirmation process in the modern field work context follows the Roman pattern, it is this tradition that will be considered in the discussion on Confirmation.



saying, “I anoint you with holy oil in the name of Jesus Christ” – a point of identification with the chrism of the anointed Christ.<sup>87</sup> Following the anointing, the presbyter laid hands on the initiate “in benediction, inviting and welcoming the Holy Spirit” – the watershed moment of the divine-human relationship.<sup>88</sup>

This conferral marked the end of the liminal period and the beginning of the incorporation as the relationship between neophytes and “established members” officially changed. Initiates were now existentially part of the community and in new relationship with the mystical body of Christ. Alistar Stewart-Sykes speaks of the effect of the hand-laying in the early church as “establish(ing) a patron-client relationship between the baptizer and the neophyte within the new patronage relationship and social system of the church.”<sup>89</sup> The initiate is no longer a slave to sin, but is to live in freedom within her or his new social context.<sup>90</sup> This was the ‘confirmation’ that the initiate had indeed received the Spirit, thus preparing the way for the final movement in early Church initiation – participation in the Eucharist.

### ***Early Church Eucharist***

The ensuing Eucharist celebration in the early church was part of an overall meal in which people brought what they could to share with the rest of the church body.<sup>91</sup> Following this communal meal, the community shared in a lengthy time of prayer, study, and hymn

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<sup>87</sup> Gerard Austin, *The Rite of Confirmation. Anointing with the Spirit* (Collegeville: Order of St. Benedict, 2004), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=UL7ZNpcfJP0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=anointing+with+the+spirit&hl=en&ei=oPf0TZH6CYTV0QG895jsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=UL7ZNpcfJP0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=anointing+with+the+spirit&hl=en&ei=oPf0TZH6CYTV0QG895jsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false), 101.

<sup>88</sup> Johnson, *Rites*, 77.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>90</sup> Rose Calabretta, *Baptism and Confirmation. The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Writings of Virgil Michel* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1998), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=SuT6wFKYrAEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=baptism+and+confirmation&hl=en&ei=9Pj0TeqPDenZ0QGtudjwDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CEMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=SuT6wFKYrAEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=baptism+and+confirmation&hl=en&ei=9Pj0TeqPDenZ0QGtudjwDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CEMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 190. Thomas Aquinas described this as a coming of age of sorts because the Christian reaches the perfect age of spiritual life – or the time when the fullness of the divine life enters into the soul.

<sup>91</sup> Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 1984), 94.

singing in an extensive service that could last for hours -- at the conclusion of which, the presiding official would take his place for the blessing of the elements.<sup>92</sup> The Didache again, provides helpful evidence for the kind of prayers of blessing given over the bread and wine:

Celebrate the Eucharist as follows: Say over the cup: "We give you thanks, Father, for the holy vine of David, your servant, which you made known to us through Jesus your servant. To you be glory forever." Over the broken bread say: "We give you thanks, Father, for the life and the knowledge which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant. To you be glory forever. As this broken bread scattered on the mountains was gathered and became one, so too, may your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. For glory and power are yours through Jesus Christ forever."<sup>93</sup>

The community then concluded the ritual by consuming the bread and the wine, and the initiate was now fully a part of the group.

### ***Dissonance and Evolution: The Eucharist Meal***

As generations passed, these practices evolved and changed from their original form. One pertinent example relates specifically to the Eucharist and how it grew increasingly formal during this era. Its link to an evening common meal was broken as its celebration became increasingly part of a formal morning liturgy in which the cup and the bread occupied the central place. This movement away from a community meal was a gradual one, and occurred in response to several growing abuses in the ceremony that created a dissonance in the process. Firstly, many of the meal participants "made haste" to eat their own meal provisions before they could be distributed to the community and "eaten in common by the whole Church."<sup>94</sup> Secondly, some members hoarded all the "more desirable foods" such as meat for themselves and friends, thus leading to an inequality that struck at the heart of a

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> "Eucharist-The Didache," The Crossroads Initiative, [http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library\\_article/652/Eucharist\\_The\\_Didache.html](http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library_article/652/Eucharist_The_Didache.html).

<sup>94</sup> John Keating, *The Agape and the Eucharist in the Early Church* (London, Methuen and Company, 1901), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=qr0MAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+agape+and+eucharist+in+the+early+church&hl=en&ei=Dv30TaaFJlRW0QG1uoDtDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=qr0MAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+agape+and+eucharist+in+the+early+church&hl=en&ei=Dv30TaaFJlRW0QG1uoDtDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 48.

united community.<sup>95</sup> Finally, some members of the community gorged on food and drank so much wine that some took the Eucharist in a state of inebriation.<sup>96</sup>

Though this is not the sharp tension detailed in the ensuing section, it is further evidence on a micro-level of the kind of dissonance and gentle change that has been a pattern in Christian initiation. In order to resolve this particular tension in which a sacred meal was being abused, the church eventually officially split the two ceremonies by celebrating the Eucharist the morning after the communal meal. While the meal remained fairly informal, the Eucharist began to evolve in a more stratified fashion in which the priest mediated the transubstantiation of the bread and wine with specific prayers and then served the elements to the congregation.<sup>97</sup> There remained minor variations of the actual ceremony in different parts of the Empire (until the advent of the printing press and the edicts of the Council of Trent which further standardized the ritual), but across the contexts the Eucharist evolved into a formal celebration with bread and wine only in response to some of the issues creating dissonance in the early church.<sup>98</sup>

## **B. Legalization and Spread of Christianity (AD 313 & AD380- circa AD 1500)**

Christianity in the Roman Empire evolved significantly when Emperor Constantine came to power and issued the Edict of Milan in 313 AD. This edict officially ended persecution of Christianity by instituting a policy of religious neutrality in which all religions

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> James McKinnon, *The Advent Project. The Later-7<sup>th</sup> Century Creation of the Roman Mass Proper* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=QHfxtBEGMPwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+advent+project&hl=en&ei=Sf30TZXMLYLN0AHSu3sDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=QHfxtBEGMPwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+advent+project&hl=en&ei=Sf30TZXMLYLN0AHSu3sDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 24.

<sup>97</sup> Mark Turnham Elvins, *Towards a People's Liturgy: The Importance of Language* (Herefordshire: Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, 1994), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=ZJ\\_U42D-I-EC&pg=PA2&dq=agape+and+sunday+morning+liturgy&hl=en&ei=Ngb1Ta2IO-XL0QHpsPjtDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=agape%20and%20sunday%20morning%20liturgy&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=ZJ_U42D-I-EC&pg=PA2&dq=agape+and+sunday+morning+liturgy&hl=en&ei=Ngb1Ta2IO-XL0QHpsPjtDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=agape%20and%20sunday%20morning%20liturgy&f=false), 2.

<sup>98</sup> John Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=vC30x7YHAjC&printsec=frontcover&dq=reforming+the+liturgy&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=Kv\\_OTfChE4Ts0gHYiZjsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=vC30x7YHAjC&printsec=frontcover&dq=reforming+the+liturgy&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=Kv_OTfChE4Ts0gHYiZjsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 58.

were to be tolerated – thus ending persecution. Unofficially, after his conversion on the Milvian Bridge, Constantine actually leaned heavily toward Christianity, and his influence was instrumental in its flourishing.<sup>99</sup> He poured massive financial aid into the rebuilding and expanding of Christian sacred pilgrimage sites, began the building of basilicas that would dominate the skylines of towns and villages, and created a “throne of Jesus” in the palace of the Emperor to demonstrate that Christians could now serve both Rome and the Christ at the same time.<sup>100</sup>

Constantine’s support, however, was not anchored in sheer benevolence. He was interested in the imperial consolidation of his own power – the means of which came through establishing an official orthodox view of Christianity to be propagated throughout the Empire.<sup>101</sup> This was a potentially difficult task given the number of theological strains of Christianity, so Constantine began holding councils to address the theological disputes erupting among various Christian movements. One of the more significant disputes standing in the way of a mainstream orthodoxy related to whether or not Jesus was of the same divine nature as God himself. In response, Constantine called one of the more well-known councils – the Council of Nicea in AD 325.

The issue revolved around a single letter in the Greek language describing the metaphysical nature of Christ. Was he *homoousios*, of the same essence as the Father, thus

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<sup>99</sup> James Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword: The Church and the Jews* (New York: Mariner Books, 2002), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=FewzTElynqUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=constantine's+sword+the+church+and+the+jews&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=ef\\_0TaAIsnt0gHb7e3sDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=FewzTElynqUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=constantine's+sword+the+church+and+the+jews&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=ef_0TaAIsnt0gHb7e3sDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 180.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. Carroll suggests Constantine was opportunistic in his religious practice and affiliation, but never wavered in his sense of transcendence. He writes, “What never varied in Constantine’s fluid religious self-understanding, something that carried over from Apollo to Christ, was that is was divinely commissioned that the rule of the whole world should belong to him.”

<sup>101</sup> Whitney Bauman, *Theology, Creation, and Environmental Ethics: From Creatio Ex Nihilo to Terra Nullis* (New York: Routledge, 2009), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=AnrkIl6O3hwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=theology,+creation,+and+environmental+ethics&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=KgjlTfLEBbOz0AHZ8ZjsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=AnrkIl6O3hwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=theology,+creation,+and+environmental+ethics&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=KgjlTfLEBbOz0AHZ8ZjsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 34.

creating a divine and divided Trinitarian Godhead; or was Jesus *homoiousios*, of similar essence as the Father, thus subjugating the divinity of Christ in a material way? Constantine called for a resolution at the Nicean Council, and it was ultimately decided that Jesus was, indeed, of the same nature as the Father. This decision carried with it two important implications. Firstly, any bishops opposing the interpretation embraced by Constantine were sent into exile.<sup>102</sup> Secondly, the Nicene Creed was established as the official orthodoxy from this point forward in Roman Christianity, and it became common practice to recite this in church communities.<sup>103</sup>

With this official orthodoxy achieved, Constantine's version of Christianity began to dominate the scene as it was easily propagated through the extensive and elaborate transportation system achieved during *Pax Romana*. Christianity spread throughout the Empire, shutting out competitors and ultimately becoming the State religion of Rome under Emperor Theodosius in AD 380 who reaffirmed the Nicene Creed and rejected all other forms of Christianity.<sup>104</sup> In further entrenching this version of Christianity, Theodosius writes,

We believe the one divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of majesty co-equal, in the Holy Trinity. We *will* that those who embrace this creed be called Catholic Christians; we brand that senseless followers of other religions by the infamous name of heretics, and forbid their conventicles to assume the name of churches; we reserve their punishment to the vengeance of Heaven, and to such measures as divine inspiration shall dictate to us.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Charles Matson Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2004), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=aNnLYL6ukr0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=constantine+and+the+christian+empire&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=gQr1TbTdAaTg0QGN\\_ZHTAQ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=aNnLYL6ukr0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=constantine+and+the+christian+empire&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=gQr1TbTdAaTg0QGN_ZHTAQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 179.

<sup>103</sup> Eastern Orthodoxy shares this same view.

<sup>104</sup> Christopher M. Belitto, *The General Councils: A History of Twenty-One Church Councils From Nicea to Vatican II* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2002), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=K6rsAx2F1IcC&pg=PA2&dq=The+General+Councils:+A+History+of+TwentyOne+Church+Councils+From+Nicea+to+Vatican+II&hl=en&ei=IAz1TbKxA4Tc0QHLiOHRDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=K6rsAx2F1IcC&pg=PA2&dq=The+General+Councils:+A+History+of+TwentyOne+Church+Councils+From+Nicea+to+Vatican+II&hl=en&ei=IAz1TbKxA4Tc0QHLiOHRDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 21.

<sup>105</sup> H.H. Milman, *The History of Christianity: From the Birth of Christ to the Abolition of Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New York: W. J. Widdleton, 1872), Google Books, <http://books.google.com/books?id=YChVAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+history+of+christianity&>

### ***Dissonance and Evolution: Original Sin, Baptism, and Confirmation***

This combined power of Roman civil and religious authority had significant implications for Christian initiation in terms of its ongoing evolution, and the various shifts in the ritual process were manifold. Even though the majority of this is due to the profound theological shift introduced by St. Augustine with the doctrine of Original Sin, a short digression illustrates the significant number of micro-shifts taking place.

For example, due to Christianity's legalization and subsequent financial windfall, new Christian churches were built throughout the Empire. Most of these churches were furnished with baptismal fonts in order to accommodate the large numbers of people that were converting to Christianity as it was quickly becoming the "religion of power" in the Roman Empire.<sup>106</sup> While full immersion for purification was still the most common baptismal method, the font also now allowed for an "affusion baptism" in which the one conducting the baptism pours copious amounts of water over the head of initiates without submerging them. This method was used initially for sick people, but even in such cases, the water remained critical as those being baptized went into the water and stood there while submersed in water.<sup>107</sup> While there was some question early on as to whether this method was efficacious, Cyprian settled this issue thus, "where the faith of the minister and the recipient is full and complete, the divine gifts are received whether the method is washing, affusion, or

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hl=en&ei=Cg31TfGYI5Oy0AHHx6XsDA&sa=X&oi=book\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false, 105.

<sup>106</sup> *The Penny Cyclopædia for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, 1835, s.v. "Baptistry."

<sup>107</sup> Joanne M. Pierce, "Baptism/Confirmation," in *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies*, ed. Orlando O. Espin and James B. Nikoloff (Collegeville: Order of Saint Benedict, 2007), Google Books,

[http://books.google.com/books?id=k85JKr1OXcQC&pg=frontcover&dq=baptismal+fonts+and+legalization+of+christianity&hl=en&ei=chH1TaPVFurl0QGOM6nNDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDUQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=baptismal%20fonts%20and%20legalization%20of%20christianity&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=k85JKr1OXcQC&pg=frontcover&dq=baptismal+fonts+and+legalization+of+christianity&hl=en&ei=chH1TaPVFurl0QGOM6nNDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDUQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=baptismal%20fonts%20and%20legalization%20of%20christianity&f=false), 113.

sprinkling.”<sup>108</sup> This evolution was a small one, but does help explain some of the current forms in which the infant’s head is sprinkled with water and seen as efficacious.

In the midst of these micro-evolutions Christian initiation also underwent a radical shift in the next two centuries because of both the influence of Augustinian theology and the rapid spread of Christianity. This shift ultimately split the timing and sequence of the sacraments, creating a ritual tension that would prove to have lasting effects not only over the next millennia of initiation practice, but even into the context of the current fieldwork. The details of this shift are outlined below, the rituals being temporally split from one another, rather than done in one day.

### ***The Split of Baptism/Confirmation and Change of Ritual Sequence***

The rapid spread of Christianity posed a new initiation problem for the religious establishment as bishops were not often present to confirm with the Spirit in the rural villages or the furthest reaches of the Empire. Since conferring the Spirit could not be the responsibility of the lay person, potential catechists would be forced to wait. In the earliest church, this may not have posed a significant issue as catechetical preparation often lasted at least a year and the initiates could wait until a bishop came to their location, thus still coupling baptism and confirmation. However, a significant theological shift introduced by St. Augustine regarding Original Sin and the nature of the human disposition resulted in the efficacy of baptism being re-conceptualized, and its importance heightened in comparison to confirmation. This shift, when combined with the rapid spread of Christianity, ultimately led to a growing temporal gap between baptism and confirmation, leading, as outlined below, to further tension.

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<sup>108</sup> Stanley Gleenslade, *Early Latin Theology: Selections from Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Jerome* (London: SCM Press, 1956), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=130YTvKKClC&printsec=frontcover&dq=early+latin+theology&hl=en&ei=6xL1Td\\_gHofq0gG0rcnvDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=130YTvKKClC&printsec=frontcover&dq=early+latin+theology&hl=en&ei=6xL1Td_gHofq0gG0rcnvDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 158.

Augustine argued sin affects the human soul at conception since the human race is now governed by evil impulses originating in sexual lust and the desire to control.<sup>109</sup> This “bent towards evil” is then transmitted to any new creation by parents during the height of sexual passion in which the soul is fused with its physical body – a process Augustine called *traducianism*; meaning that since Adam, all human beings are marked with the stains of their fathers and mothers.<sup>110</sup> When Adam introduced sin into the world it corrupted the procreation process and marred all subsequent souls. Augustine then interpreted, “through Adam, all have sinned” in Romans 5 to be a sin so grievous that all human beings, even infants, are destined to Hell without the baptism of purification and regeneration.

Augustine’s version of Christian meta-physics represented a marked shift from earlier Judeo-Christian theologians who did not suggest such a dismal view of the human soul.

Richard Higgins notes the contrast between Augustinian theology and that of the Old Testament theologians, seeing Augustine’s view as a major departure from the Hebrew Bible.

The idea of sin as a condition, a stain upon the soul, is generally foreign to the ancient rabbis. “For them, sin is an act, a deed, although one prompted by the evil impulse with which we are all born and against which we all must struggle. But the newborn baby is innocent and immaculate. There is thus no rite in Judaism that washes away the baby’s sin, like the Christian rite of baptism.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Joseph T. Kelley, *Saint Augustine of Hippo: Selections From Confessions and Other Selected Writings* (Woodstock: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2010), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=FnnvO743FlwC&pg=frontcover&dq=Augustine+original+sin+and+sexual+lust&hl=en&ei=NWj1TduiN8Tr0gGeqJnsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&sqi=2&ved=0CDUQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=Augustine%20original%20sin%20and%20sexual%20lust&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=FnnvO743FlwC&pg=frontcover&dq=Augustine+original+sin+and+sexual+lust&hl=en&ei=NWj1TduiN8Tr0gGeqJnsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&sqi=2&ved=0CDUQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=Augustine%20original%20sin%20and%20sexual%20lust&f=false), 152.

<sup>110</sup> John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=7YeKchlhn7MC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Augustine:+Ancient+Thought+Baptized&hl=en&src=bnrr&ei=T2n1TebKHeGO0gHu0vTpDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=7YeKchlhn7MC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Augustine:+Ancient+Thought+Baptized&hl=en&src=bnrr&ei=T2n1TebKHeGO0gHu0vTpDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), appendix 2. For Augustine, only Adam’s soul came directly from the hand of God and was not stained by sin.

<sup>111</sup> “Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination: A Forum About Gary Anderson’s Genesis of Perfection,” Harvard Divinity Forum, <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/news/bulletin/articles/anderson.html>.



Early Christian theologians tended to take this Jewish view of the soul as well. Gregory Nazianzen argues salvation comes from both ourselves and from God.<sup>112</sup> John Chrysostom suggests God's grace may take the lead in moving us out of our sin, but it must cooperate with our free will.<sup>113</sup> Athanasius states that while humankind is certainly corrupted, it has the capacity to throw off the shackles of sin and recover a proper vision of the world. All three would agree that newborn babies are exempt from whatever the effects of sin might be, and they would certainly not be destined for Hell.<sup>114</sup>

Augustine's propositions, however, challenged this view and led to a critical theological show-down with one of his contemporaries, Pelagius. Rejecting Augustine, Pelagius argued all humankind has received the "grace of knowledge" in which they can, through reason, grasp God's Law while understanding the implications of disobedience.<sup>115</sup> Humans have been corrupted to some degree by sin, but were still able to recognize the good God gave first in the Mosaic Law and then in the teachings and example of Christ. Therefore, humans could truly obey God without sinning – the position of *impeccantia* in which "a Christian is he who is not one in word but in deed, who imitates and follows Christ in everything .....in whose heart there is no malice but only piety and goodness."<sup>116</sup> This can only be attained through "the strenuous efforts of the will."<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1978), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=UivDgM0WywoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=early+christian+doctrines&hl=en&ei=O2r1Tej0BuPX0QHfsuXtDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=UivDgM0WywoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=early+christian+doctrines&hl=en&ei=O2r1Tej0BuPX0QHfsuXtDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 361.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 352.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Tatha Wiley, *Original sin; Origins, Developments, and Contemporary Meanings* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2002), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=eUVrj1R8f2oC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Original+sin;+Origins,+Developments,+and+Contemporary+Meanings&hl=en&ei=UWz1TfDhG8n10gHp4P3rDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Original%20sin%3B%20Origins%2C%20Developments%2C%20and%20Contemporary%20Meanings&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=eUVrj1R8f2oC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Original+sin;+Origins,+Developments,+and+Contemporary+Meanings&hl=en&ei=UWz1TfDhG8n10gHp4P3rDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Original%20sin%3B%20Origins%2C%20Developments%2C%20and%20Contemporary%20Meanings&f=false), 68.

<sup>116</sup> Kelly, *Doctrines*, 360.

<sup>117</sup> Wiley, *Original Sin*, 67. Wiley writes, "Pelagius saw the slight undertow of bad habits as being socially conditioned and reversible with effort and conscious reconditioning."

Pelagius' beliefs on baptism, therefore, naturally fit into this theological paradigm as the newborn baby receives heavenly life should he or she die. There is no original sin or "congenital fault" with which a person is born that would compromise their relationship with God; therefore baptism does not wash away some kind of imputed stain.

For adults the sacrament was medicinal and regenerative, but its effect on infants was purely benedictory; what they received at the font was not eternal life, but spiritual illumination, adoption as children of God, citizenship of the heavenly Jerusalem, sanctification and membership of Christ, with inheritance in the kingdom of heaven.<sup>118</sup>

To settle the debate, Pope Innocent I called the Council of Carthage in 411-418 AD where, "taking Augustine as their authority," the Council rejected Pelagius, branded his views as heretical, and issued two canons.<sup>119</sup> Firstly, Adam was created immortal, but lost his immortality because of sin. Secondly, original sin is inherited according to traducianistic principles. Augustine's distinction between the first sin of Adam (*peccatum originale originans*) and the condition of original sin (*peccatum originale originatum*) became permanent features in the doctrines of sin and redemption.<sup>120</sup>

The implications of this theological shift were substantial and long-lasting. Baptism grew to a place of prominence and its timing critical since it no longer just purified and regenerated, but now removed the stain that condemns all humankind to eternal damnation. Therefore, it needed to be performed as soon as possible in human life. This created significant dissonance in how to negotiate the tripartite initiation process, and resulted in some distinct evolutions in the rituals.

Firstly, as mentioned previously, this shift occurred during the rapid spread of Christianity which was now established as far north as Great Britain and as far east as India.

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<sup>118</sup> Kelly, *Doctrines*, 361.

<sup>119</sup> Wiley, *Original Sin*, 276.

<sup>120</sup> Wiley, *Original Sin*, 224.

This created a problem for the traditional ritual process since standard orthopraxy required that bishops still administer the confirmation rite; yet there were rarely bishops visiting the furthest reaches of the Empire. This was even more the case when the Empire collapsed and transportation was more difficult; initiates may have to wait years for their confirmation.<sup>121</sup> This may have been feasible, though still risky, for healthy adults, but there was now a significant risk for the sickly of dying before baptism and thus going to Hell.

In response, the Roman church ultimately made what proved a landmark decision with significant implications for the evolution of initiation practice; local priests could baptize at any time, and confirmation could wait until the bishops made their way to the various villages and cities Europe and Asia. One of the earliest extant texts describing the church liturgies of the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Gelasian Sacramentary*, outlines this shift in Christian initiation among sick catechumens:

After an abbreviated blessing of the font and waters, baptism and post-baptism anointing (not confirmation) were administered (by the presbyter.) But in this rite the post-baptismal anointing was followed immediately by the reception of first communion....(the) rites of handlaying and anointing associated with the bishop, therefore, were only added after first communion had already been given....if the sick catechumen survived, then, at some point, the bishop would “complete” the neophyte’s initiation by supplying what had been omitted, namely the hand-laying.<sup>122</sup>

This precedent for dealing with the sick also now became highly influential in the development of infant baptism.<sup>123</sup> The mortality rate for infants in the Roman Empire was “tragically high” with as many as 30 deaths per 100 pregnancies.<sup>124</sup> Since the sequence of

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<sup>121</sup> Richard Robert Osmer, *Confirmation: Presbyterian Practices in Ecumenical Perspective* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 1996), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=9LU3fGWckLcC&printsec=frontcover&dq=richard+osmer+confirmation&hl=en&ei=rGz1TZ\\_iCuja0QHLw8TrDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=9LU3fGWckLcC&printsec=frontcover&dq=richard+osmer+confirmation&hl=en&ei=rGz1TZ_iCuja0QHLw8TrDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 51.

<sup>122</sup> Johnson, *Rites*, 220.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> David Soren and Noelle Soren, *A Roman Villa and a Late Roman Infant Cemetery* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1998), Google Books, <http://books.google.com/books?id=U8Muzx1VrbwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=A+Roman+Villa+and+a+Late+>

initiation had been altered for those who were sick, it was a logical next step to include infants in baptism given the high possibility of their death and immediate damnation – since they were not exempt from the effects or guilt of Original Sin. The tension created from the fear of dying in an ‘unbaptized’ state led to the dramatic split of baptism and confirmation, and made infant baptism the normative practice – altering Christian initiation for many centuries to come.<sup>125</sup>

The second, and closely related implication of Augustinian theology falling within this pattern of tension – though not as far reaching for Christian initiation today - concerned whether or not those who had been baptized could receive the Eucharist even if they had not yet been confirmed. Augustine once again settled this issue in that he had a robust view as to the necessity of Eucharist in the salvation process as he and those he taught saw “participation in eternal life is dependent on the reception of Holy Communion.”<sup>126</sup> Thus, in the words of one confirmation director who participated in the field work, “infants (in the early church) needed to gum down the bread and the wine.” This, however, is a recent change which returns to Augustine’s view, for unlike infant baptism, infant communion changed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century at the Council of Trent where it was determined that infants could not lose their baptismal grace and therefore did not need to take communion.<sup>127</sup>

The final implication of Augustinian theology involved the re-evaluation of the timing of catechetical instruction. Prior to the doctrine of Original Sin, neophytes were typically

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Roman+Infant+Cemetery&hl=en&ei=hm31TYq7MvCo0AHglsCPBQ&sa=X&oi=book\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false, 488.

<sup>125</sup> James F. White and Nathan D. Mitchell, *Roman Catholic Worship: Trent to Today* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=ZSmItS8qtuoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Roman+Catholic+Worship&hl=en&ei=Cm71Tfy9DeLW0QGAgXsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=ZSmItS8qtuoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Roman+Catholic+Worship&hl=en&ei=Cm71Tfy9DeLW0QGAgXsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 16.

<sup>126</sup> Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=WI2gC7lFmC4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Eucharist+in+the+West&hl=en&ei=IW71TcqJMMP0gHDhP3uDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=WI2gC7lFmC4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Eucharist+in+the+West&hl=en&ei=IW71TcqJMMP0gHDhP3uDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 33.

<sup>127</sup> Austin, *Anointing*, 133.

expected to participate in at least a year of instruction prior to their initiation sequence to, as stated earlier, “make sure their doctrine was sound.” Now, however, because both baptism and Eucharist occurred among infants, the perceived need for catechism was greatly reduced – infants were already taking communion and being recognized as part of the community of faith so what, therefore, would be the impetus and purpose of their instruction?

In response, the institutional church began wedding catechism with Confirmation and suggesting it occur when children reach the “age of reason” – usually defined as between seven and ten years of age. The imparting of the Spirit still was core to ritual theology, but the emphasis seemed to shift to some “further perfection” attained at Confirmation:

Due to the temporal separation of baptism and confirmation in the West, differing theologies of confirmation developed in an attempt to supply confirmation with a uniqueness that its ritual distinction from baptism alone failed to do....the effect of confirmation as making one a soldier of Christ (*miles Christi*) developed as a result of the Crusades, but it is also mentioned in much more authoritative recent documents.<sup>128</sup>

The above details describe the forms of the “dissonance dialectic” in the initiation process when Christianity was legalized in the Roman Empire as well as its profound evolution which carries with it implications for today’s practice. Decisions regarding meaning and order were monumental during this era, and extended discussion was necessary as the decisions then had the most dramatic impact on Christian initiation over the next several hundred years. In addition, the expansion of Christianity in this era transformed it

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<sup>128</sup> Kevin T. Hart, “The Sacrament of Confirmation (cc. 879-896),” in *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, ed. John P. Beal and others (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2000), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=JKgZEjvB5cEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=New+Commentary+on+the+Code+of+Canon+Law&hl=en&ei=x2\\_1TbupBKep0AGwxpjsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=JKgZEjvB5cEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=New+Commentary+on+the+Code+of+Canon+Law&hl=en&ei=x2_1TbupBKep0AGwxpjsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 1067. As evidenced in the field work, this shift was significant enough that it still reverberates today. In an interview with several men in approximately in their 70s or 80s in one local parish, they reported remembering their confirmation emphasized being trained as a “soldier of Christ” by the nuns. They were then expected to go out into the world to defend the doctrine against the Protestants.

from a religious pattern located primarily in the Middle East to a growing global institution expanding ever further into various parts of the world. As the Roman Catholic pattern carried further away from its locus in Rome, it became more difficult to manage in an “orthodox” way and ritual continued to evolve in the midst of the new and different sociological realities of the various locations in which it was lived out. An exhaustive historical survey of various evolutions and contexts is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it will be helpful to note some of the ongoing minor changes in a third era of the church comprising the late Medieval period and including the Reformations in which the significant and enduring change in the theology of confirmation was increasingly established as normative.

### **C. Late Medieval to Protestant and Catholic Reformations (circa 1200-1600 AD)**

#### ***Evolution of Baptism***

This nearly universal Roman practice of infant baptism continued evolving in the ensuing centuries, but the essential meaning carried on through multiple contexts since the fear infants were destined to hell without baptism seemed sufficient motivation to reinforce Augustinian interpretation.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, baptism continued to be typically celebrated within a few days of the infant’s birth and often “coincided with the first time the child came to church.”<sup>130</sup> However, some minor changes did emerge over the long period of time between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Reformations. The initial family visit with their newborn for baptism did not necessarily occur during a church service with the community present; but shifted towards the now “prevalent custom of baptizing children at any time in an

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<sup>129</sup> Leonard Vander Zee, *Christ, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper* (Downer’s Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2004), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=TGS1dxLyPQYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Christ,+Baptism,+and+the+Lord%E2%80%99s+Supper&hl=en&ei=3ob1TcX9AsTV0QH9tLSVDQ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=TGS1dxLyPQYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Christ,+Baptism,+and+the+Lord%E2%80%99s+Supper&hl=en&ei=3ob1TcX9AsTV0QH9tLSVDQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 128.

<sup>130</sup> Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century* (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=N0oRWj1hXTEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Shaping+of+the+Reformed+Baptismal+Rite+in+the+Sixteenth+Century&hl=en&ei=-If1TYqlLITy0gGIxanuDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=N0oRWj1hXTEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Shaping+of+the+Reformed+Baptismal+Rite+in+the+Sixteenth+Century&hl=en&ei=-If1TYqlLITy0gGIxanuDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 30.

almost empty church.”<sup>131</sup> Essentially, the parents could come when they wished for baptism to ensure heavenly destiny, but such a visit had become little more than “an operation performed upon the infant, a solemn exercise and ‘naming’ ceremony.”<sup>132</sup>

This behavior represented a shift away from the communal celebration. The primary purpose was no longer to purify and regenerate in order that one may be prepared to join a Spirit-empowered community of faith. Instead, the eternal destiny of the individual was now at stake and their purification and regeneration was necessary for heaven, not for proper disposition in the heavenly community on earth. This early divorce of the ritual from entrance into the visible community forms an important precursor to the field study in which the initiation sequence fails to “initiate” in the common understandings of the term – a subject which will comprise the following chapter. Therefore, the evolution of baptism into a more personal ritual during the late medieval era and into the Reformations is important for understanding the ritual dissonance in the Minneapolis context in which the individualized faith journey seems to take precedence over entering into a worldwide community with a localized expression.

### ***Evolution of Eucharist***

The practice of infant Eucharist was slowly being abandoned during this time due to some further debates about the nature of the transubstantiation. A philosophy of Symbolism persisted from the first century writers into the life of the church in the 12<sup>th</sup> century with the implication that Jesus was not just “mysteriously present” in the bread and wine in a real way, but that the wine and bread actually became the body and blood of Jesus – no longer

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<sup>131</sup> Susan K. Wood, *One Baptism: Ecumenical Dimensions of the Doctrine of Baptism* (Collegeville: Order of Saint Benedict, 2009), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=OX6eJDa0\\_mIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=one+baptism&hl=en&ei=P4r1TZGaNKT20gGah6ntDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=2&sqi=2&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=OX6eJDa0_mIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=one+baptism&hl=en&ei=P4r1TZGaNKT20gGah6ntDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&sqi=2&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false), 122. Wood takes material from J.D.C. Fisher, “Lutheran, Anglican, and Reformed Rites,” in *The Study of Liturgy* rev. ed., ed. Cheslyn Jones and others (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 155.

<sup>132</sup> Johnson, *Rites*, 311.

retaining their status as elements of food and drink. Since the crumbs and liquid that were Jesus' body and blood were often mishandled by the infants, the "Church began to feel uneasy about the communion of persons who might not be able to swallow the host."<sup>133</sup> Crude Realism was also replacing Symbolism as an epistemological frame for understanding the world during this era, putting additional pressure on notions of the mysterious. The combination of these sociological and philosophical factors meant that infant Eucharist would mostly die out in the Roman pattern, and was officially abolished by the Council of Trent in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>134</sup>

With the practice eliminated, a new question arose regarding when it was appropriate to be communicated for the first time. In addressing this debate, the 4th Council of Lateran (1215) coined the now well-known phrase, "age of discretion" as the moment in which communion should happen for the first time. Criteria for the proper age of discretion included when children were considered capable of understanding and stating their sins for the first time in the confession sacrament.<sup>135</sup> While a general consensus emerged that children could be as young as seven years old at the time of confession and first communion, the Council of Cologne in 1280 required youth to be at least ten years old.<sup>136</sup> There was a wide degree of latitude given as to when the "age of discretion" was reached, and when the child should be communicated. This latitude still influences the timing of first confession and communion, as many parish churches perform this ritual at different times.

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<sup>133</sup> J.D.C Fisher, *Baptism in the Medieval West* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2004), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=h4YG1kwMieEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Baptism+in+the+Medieval+West&hl=en&ei=Iov1TaaOPIXd0QGUo5DtDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=h4YG1kwMieEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Baptism+in+the+Medieval+West&hl=en&ei=Iov1TaaOPIXd0QGUo5DtDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 115.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Mark Seale, *The Church Speaks About the Sacraments With Children* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1990), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=FvfSRwXLp8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Church+Speaks+About+the+Sacraments+With+Children&hl=en&ei=c4v1TfDwJoPL0QGdp5jsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=FvfSRwXLp8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Church+Speaks+About+the+Sacraments+With+Children&hl=en&ei=c4v1TfDwJoPL0QGdp5jsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 37.

<sup>136</sup> Osmer, *Confirmation*, 54.



### ***Evolution of Confirmation***

Given the split from baptism and changes in the Eucharist, Confirmation was left bearing the least resemblance to its original form in the early church. The church struggled to find a way to justify its practice given the fact initiates had already ensured their heavenly destiny and participated as part of the community in the partaking of the Eucharist. Initially, in response to this dissonance, confirmation and catechism were joined together in order that the initiate may learn the doctrines of the faith and be confirmed in their knowledge; however, this approach waned over the centuries to the point that “Confirmation had become the great neglected sacrament.....(and) any real catechesis in relationship to Christian initiation had by this time (the later Middle Ages) clearly ceased in any active or conscious manner.”<sup>137</sup> With heaven assured and the Eucharist taken, there was simply not sufficient motivation to continue in these rituals. At best, it was expected that young people who had attained the age of discretion would memorize the Apostles’ Creed, Hail Mary, and Our Father.<sup>138</sup> However, there seemed little urgency to complete the confirmation, and increasing tension concerning its place in the initiation process – particularly since the role of the Spirit was being neglected.

As a result, another evolution was introduced by theologians such as Peter Lombard who argued the Holy Spirit was now given primarily for the remission of sins at the moment of baptism.<sup>139</sup> This helped explain how initiates could fully participate as part of the community of faith in Eucharist despite the lack of confirmation: they already had some measure of the Spirit. While this allowed for the Holy Spirit to be present in the life of the community members, it also further complicated efforts to emphasize the importance of the

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<sup>137</sup> Johnson, *Rites*, 314.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Darwell Stone, *Holy Baptism* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=q34XAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Holy+Baptism&hl=en&ei=A4z1TcPBG6mq0AHckunQDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CEIQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=q34XAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Holy+Baptism&hl=en&ei=A4z1TcPBG6mq0AHckunQDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CEIQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false), 82.

confirmation sacrament since its uniqueness related to conferring the Spirit for the first time in the life of the initiate:

Since no one could (or would) deny that baptism itself ‘gave’ the Holy Spirit, medieval theologians struggled to find the appropriate language to distinguish and clarify the meaning of what was now seen as “two gifts” of the Holy Spirit in Christian initiation.<sup>140</sup>

The concepts introduced, therefore, to justify and explain a continuing practice of confirmation included the strengthening of the Holy Spirit for the preaching of the Gospel, the granting of full sanctity of knowledge and power, and/or the fortifying with virtues for the struggles of life.<sup>141</sup> While some of these notions are close to reasons given for the conferral of the Spirit in the early church, it is still a dramatic departure to conceive of entering into a divine-human partnership through baptism only. There was no laying on of hands, and no expectation of such confirmation until the initiate had reached the age of discretion and was within “seven miles” of the nearest bishop.<sup>142</sup> The form of the ritual may have stayed somewhat similar, but its meaning and emphasis had significantly changed given the importance of baptism and its neglect in practice. Confirmation would give rise to significant tension in this era as the protestors within and outside the church argued over it and other issues.

### ***Further Dissonance and Evolution: Confirmation as a Sacrament?***

The rising Protestant Reformation, it should be noted, did not consist of two divergent religious patterns colliding in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but was a division within the Catholic Church itself. Therefore, the tension resulting from the arguments around the role of Confirmation initially occurred within the leadership of the Catholic Church and not between two

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<sup>140</sup> Johnson, *Rites*, 253.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=oOZQWewRPBgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Medieval+Children&hl=en&ei=YYz1TaiMJ82u0AGetsDsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=oOZQWewRPBgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Medieval+Children&hl=en&ei=YYz1TaiMJ82u0AGetsDsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 219.

competing Christian movements. Ultimately, then, the implications of the discussion on confirmation affected this entire Christian community.

The Reformation itself started partially in response to perceived corruption within the Catholic Church on both the sociological and theological levels. In terms of sociology, bishops governing the people were not necessarily appointed because of their spiritual leadership and aptitude, but were instead largely political appointments which made discipline of them quite difficult should it become necessary.<sup>143</sup> These bishops, in turn, rarely supervised the clergy under their purview, and the clergy (sometimes unfairly) became known for their greed and incompetence.<sup>144</sup> Theologically, the catalyst for the Reformation related to the notion of purgatory and the related indulgences – purgatory being a place where those destined for heaven go after their death to be fully purified before entering into heaven. It is a place of penance for the deceased, and the time spent in purgatory directly related to the pervasiveness and magnitude of the sin involved.<sup>145</sup>

According to tradition, however, bishops and priests had the power to cancel some of the penance necessary through distributing the “infinite merits of Christ” known as “indulgences.”<sup>146</sup> These indulgences could be purchased by the living on behalf of their dead loved ones in order to secure an earlier release from purgatory. The funds generated in this interchange were used to maintain the Catholic institution through the building and repair of

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<sup>143</sup> Norman Cantor, *Civilization of the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=0qiYM2\\_HhJgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Civilization+of+the+Middle+Ag es&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=q4z1TdOnDubY0gHKooDxDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=0qiYM2_HhJgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Civilization+of+the+Middle+Ag es&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=q4z1TdOnDubY0gHKooDxDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 501.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Nancy Van Duesen, *The Souls of Purgatory: The Spiritual Diary of a Seventeenth-Century Afro-Peruvian Mystic* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=y3uspbVfxrgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Souls+of+Purgatory+\(&hl=en&ei=7Iz1TeYJ6ne0QGwzeXhAg&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=y3uspbVfxrgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Souls+of+Purgatory+(&hl=en&ei=7Iz1TeYJ6ne0QGwzeXhAg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 32.

<sup>146</sup> Greg Dues, *Catholic Customs and Traditions: A Popular Guide* (New London: Twenty-Third Publications, 2000), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=ajZ\\_aRVXn8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Catholic+Customs+and+Tradition s&hl=en&ei=F471TeWQHOX00gHfiqTtDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDkQ6AE wAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=ajZ_aRVXn8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Catholic+Customs+and+Tradition s&hl=en&ei=F471TeWQHOX00gHfiqTtDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDkQ6AE wAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 158.

the churches.<sup>147</sup> It was this corrupted mix of theology, sociology, greed, and power that caused the growing sense of disillusionment and led Martin Luther, a Catholic monk, to call for an internal reformation.

As one burdened by his own sense of sin, Luther was known to spend long periods of time in silence and solitude agonizing over the corruption of his own heart and his need for constant penance to justify himself before God. All this changed for Luther, however, when his reading of Romans developed his concept of “justification by faith” by which he determined that people are not justified by their penance or indulgences but by their faith in Jesus (*sola fide*) who has already paid the penance for everyone.<sup>148</sup> Soon thereafter, Luther nailed his 95 thesis on the door of the Wittenberg Church – each of which outlined a particular dimension of reformation needed.<sup>149</sup>

Among his reforming ideas, Luther emphasized the importance of the Bible in his theology of *sola scriptura*, thus rejecting the historical role of tradition in determining faith, theology, and practice. If a practice or theological notion was not found in Scripture, it was to be rejected without qualification thus, in his mind, eliminating the possibility of human corruption. Luther’s *sola scriptura* had profound effects on the status of the sacraments in general, and confirmation specifically. Whereas Luther found support for baptism and Eucharist in the Scriptures, he did not find confirmation in the Bible and thus eliminated it as a sacrament. Luther insisted, “Confirmation is not commanded in the Scriptures.”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Harry Loewen, *Luther and the Radicals* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University, 1974), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=XoQfMV5wCIYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Luther+and+the+Radicals&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=vo71TeqNHITc0QHLiOHRDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=XoQfMV5wCIYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Luther+and+the+Radicals&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=vo71TeqNHITc0QHLiOHRDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 32.

<sup>149</sup> Michael Mullett, *Luther* (London: Methuen and Company, 1986), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=EO9WBSIDpuUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Michael+Mullett,+Luther.&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=CI\\_1TbnqFuTt0gGX4cXvDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=EO9WBSIDpuUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Michael+Mullett,+Luther.&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=CI_1TbnqFuTt0gGX4cXvDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 19.

<sup>150</sup> Joseph Stump, *An Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism* (Philadelphia: General Council Publication House, 1909), Google Books,

Luther's ideas left the people and the Church in a state of flux regarding confirmation which, though it had become increasingly irrelevant in the initiation order, still retained its status as one of the seven key sacraments of the Catholic Church. To reject it would be to reject 1500 years of history. However, amid the present disillusionment, Luther was quickly winning converts to his cause. The tension arose as to how to respond to all of Luther's objections – including his claims regarding confirmation – and who would win the argument within the church.

In response to Luther, the Catholic establishment held what is the Council of Trent from 1545-1563 in order to consider the call for reformation across a number of levels while considering the objections of Luther himself, one of which relates to the place of confirmation in Christian initiation. The Council ended up rejecting Luther's claims and focused on establishing all the sacraments in Scripture in order to counter Luther's arguments from the basis of *sola scriptura*. Regarding their decision, Pope Paul III rebuffed Luther by saying, "If any one saith, that the sacraments of the New Law were not all instituted by Jesus Christ, our Lord; or, that they are more, or less, than seven, to wit, Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Order, and Matrimony; or even that any one of these seven is not truly and properly a sacrament; let him be anathema."<sup>151</sup>

The most significant result of this historic reformation and counter-reformation is, of course, the split of the Roman Catholic Church into two factions – the historical pattern of the Roman Church and the newly developed group of protestors who began forming dozens, and ultimately hundreds, of denominations and strains of Christianity. For the first time in history,

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[http://books.google.com/books?id=cKFZAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=An+Explanation+of+Luther%E2%80%99s+Small+Catechism&hl=en&ei=PY\\_1TYPJDcbq0QHBpT0oBg&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=results&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=cKFZAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=An+Explanation+of+Luther%E2%80%99s+Small+Catechism&hl=en&ei=PY_1TYPJDcbq0QHBpT0oBg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=results&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 147.

<sup>151</sup> University of Pennsylvania Department of History, *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of History* (Philadelphia: Department of History, 1902), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=2TgNAAAAIAAJ&pg=RA2frontcover&dq=en&ei=YpH1TYOgMIT10gG7zdT\\_CA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=If%20any%20one%20saith%2C%20that%20the%20sacraments&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=2TgNAAAAIAAJ&pg=RA2frontcover&dq=en&ei=YpH1TYOgMIT10gG7zdT_CA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=If%20any%20one%20saith%2C%20that%20the%20sacraments&f=false), 36.

and as a result of the dissonance in theological views of the sacraments, the ritual sequence evolved in such a way that some Christian patterns did not include confirmation. While Catholicism retained the traditional initiation sacraments for entry into the church, the Protestants began to focus on the evidence for faith alone as a means of entering and participating in the body of Christ. This dissonance still exists today in varying degrees and tangentially relates to what occurred at Vatican II – the final era under consideration that demonstrates the ongoing pattern of dissonance and evolution of the ritual sacraments.<sup>152</sup>

#### **D. The Councils of Vatican II (1962-1965)**

One of the many issues under consideration during the Vatican II Council related to whether the order of the initiation sacraments should be officially changed at the institutional level given past precedent and common practice in many locations where Eucharist precedes confirmation. Emerging from the discussions of this Council the Cardinals and Pope prescribed a “restored order” of the initiation sacraments to regain consistency with earliest practice. Baptism would remain first in sequence, but Confirmation should precede the Eucharist in the ritual order.

However, the previously defined “age of discretion” remained between six and eight years old, so among the implications of this declaration included the fact that confirmation should no longer be a juvenile practice. Though it would be up to each parish to implement the policy – an issue of dissonance to be discussed below - the new order became the stated normative expectation of the Rome. With this declaration, the Vatican “reversed a thousand

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<sup>152</sup> Interestingly, as will be demonstrated in the field work in which initiates were disappearing from the church, it did not seem to matter whether the initiates were Protestant or Catholic. While the study focuses on Catholic initiation, a comparative sample of several Protestant churches seemed to indicate a similar lack of initiate retention. The arguments and tension of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and whether or not confirmation is considered a sacrament, certainly relates to the function and form of the initiation process, but seems to have little bearing on whether or not the initiates leave their parish or church at the end of their initiation.

years of initiatory practice and attitude.”<sup>153</sup> In discussing the decision, the chairman of the committee, Balthasar Fischer, appeals to the “ancient texts” because “while they link us to the past.....they answer contemporary needs....” Pope John Paul clearly delineated the declared order according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which states:

The sharing in the divine nature given to men through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and received in the Eucharist the food of eternal life. By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity.<sup>154</sup>

The impetus behind this praxis-altering decision seems to be two-fold. Firstly, the Church was attempting to address the issue of adults “converting from other Christian religions.”<sup>155</sup> In doing so, the Vatican created the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) so non-Catholic people could go through proper initiation and be “made full members of the church at this one liturgical celebration rather than receiving Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist at separate times.”<sup>156</sup> In an increasingly globalized society in which religions, ethnicities, races, and people groups are mixing – and, in particular, marrying – across contexts in greater numbers, the issue of Catholic conversion among non-Catholic adults began taking on an increasing importance.

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<sup>153</sup> William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=1SMlrfzsK1oC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Augustine+and+the&hl=en&ei=7pH1Tf3dGvKv0AHvg\\_TtDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=1SMlrfzsK1oC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Augustine+and+the&hl=en&ei=7pH1Tf3dGvKv0AHvg_TtDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false), 1.

<sup>154</sup> *Catechism*, 276.

<sup>155</sup> “What is the RCIA Process?” Catholic Arch-Diocese of Sydney, <http://www.rcia.org.au/parish-information/what-is-the-rcia-process.html>.

<sup>156</sup> David R. Maines and Michael J. McCallion, *Transforming Catholicism. Liturgical Change in the Vatican II Church* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=alVDphVKv4YC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Transforming+Catholicism&hl=en&ei=3ZL1Tfe\\_CaTq0gG8x\\_HYCg&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=alVDphVKv4YC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Transforming+Catholicism&hl=en&ei=3ZL1Tfe_CaTq0gG8x_HYCg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 83.

Secondly, the decision to restore the order involves placing the Eucharist at the end of the initiation process once again where it serves as the ultimate expression of the Catholic faith. It is at the weekly mass where parishioners continue their faith journey of conversion, and celebrating the Eucharist is intended to be the “source and summit of the whole work of evangelization.”<sup>157</sup> Were Confirmation the final act of initiation, the importance of the Eucharist is unduly and improperly minimized, for it should mark both the end of Christian initiation and the beginning of a lifelong, weekly journey of transformation as the initiate and the community experience the mystery of Jesus in the bread and wine. In addition to non-Christian adult initiation, the shift in sacramental order was therefore established to maximize the importance of the Mass:

Christ the Lord made the new people of kingdom of priests to God....The baptized, by generation and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood....Therefore all the disciples of Christ...should present themselves as a sacrifice, living, holy, and pleasing to God....If this (sacrifice) is done at the Eucharist, the faithful will understand they are also to exercise their priestly function after the Mass by witness of a holy life and by active charity.<sup>158</sup>

### ***Dissonance and Evolution: Lack of Implementation***

Despite the official change in order, there have been numerous surveys conducted regarding the effectiveness of its implementation. There are a number of American dioceses and parishes that have implemented the desired and indeed the traditional sequence as advised. According to their internet information, some dioceses, such as the Diocese of

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<sup>157</sup> (Cardinal) Justin Rigali, *Reliving Vatican II. It's All About Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2006), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=GialfAWgNkC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Reliving+Vatican+II.&hl=en&ei=WpP1TeO5J7Gz0AHE39HsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=GialfAWgNkC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Reliving+Vatican+II.&hl=en&ei=WpP1TeO5J7Gz0AHE39HsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 97.

<sup>158</sup> Jacob Nangelimalil, *The Relationship Between Eucharistic Liturgy, the Interior Life, and the Social Witness of the Church According to Joseph Cardinal Parecattil* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1995), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=mnMOiul2KcC&pg=frontcover&dq=The+Relationship+Between+Eucharistic+Liturgy,+the+Interior+Life&hl=en&ei=yZP1TY7UCYP20gGkvY3uDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=mnMOiul2KcC&pg=frontcover&dq=The+Relationship+Between+Eucharistic+Liturgy,+the+Interior+Life&hl=en&ei=yZP1TY7UCYP20gGkvY3uDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 47.



Phoenix – one of the largest cities in the southwestern United States – has developed new “Policy and Guidelines” for city parishes in 2005.<sup>159</sup> The age of Confirmation has been changed from 16 years old to 8 or 9 years, in the third grade of elementary school. The children will be confirmed after the priest’s homily and prior to their first Eucharist at a predetermined and designated Mass service.

However, fifty years after the Council’s decision the change in sequence finds a large number of parishes which have not reordered the sacraments. Doing so means those entrusted with initiation would have to overhaul all the catechetical materials for instruction to make them age-appropriate if confirmation shifts to a much younger group of initiates. The work required is evident in the edict the bishop of Gaylord, MI pronounced in 2002 to change the order:

This effective date has been chosen to enable parishes to put in place the necessary process of formation for the sacraments and continuing parish program for faith development as a lifelong process for parents and children. Such a formation process must be family-centered, scripturally-based and carried out in a mystagogical mode.

In preparation for the introduction in all parishes of this formation process, I have asked the directors of our program secretariats to prepare for parishes and parish staffs the appropriate materials for an understanding of such a process, as well as formation experiences for parish leaders who will oversee and facilitate this process in the parishes. These materials and experiences will be available in advance of January 2002.<sup>160</sup>

While this seems a fairly reasonable request, the amount of work necessary on the ground level for those entrusted with the initiation of the parish could potentially be overwhelming and may help to explain why so many parishes have, as of now, failed to

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<sup>159</sup> Diocese of Phoenix, “The Restored Order of the Sacraments of Initiation,” <http://www.ewtn.com/library/BISHOPS/ordsacinit.htm>.

<sup>160</sup> Diocese of Gaylord, “The Sequence for the Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation of Children in the Diocese of Gaylord,” January 2001, <http://www.dioceseofgaylord.org/inside/sacraments-of-initiation--260/>.

implement the new order.<sup>161</sup> In addition, none of the churches in the field work were using restored order among their youth, and while such direct questions were not part of the initial frame, there are hints from the confirmation directors of how difficult implementing a “restored order” would be. One of the confirmation directors did not actually attend the church in which she conducted confirmation and only met with the confirmands once a month for 8-9 months before the process was completed. She was extremely busy, did not have the support of the parents to meet more often, and was not paid as a full-time staff member.

While more details are provided in the fieldwork that are also tangentially related to this dissonance in “restored order,” at this point it is only necessary to note there is a lack of implementation across parts of the United States. This has resulted in wide variety among the parishes and their practices and the ideology as espoused by Vatican II – all of which is simply part of the long-standing pattern of dissonance evident in the historical review of this chapter. The outcome of this dissonance, if any, is not yet clear. As is also the case in the fieldwork in which dissonance is current, we do not yet have the full perspective of history by which to see a change and evolution. While hints exist, as we shall see, related to the how the church is evolving to meet the issue of attrition in the fieldwork, it is less clear whether the church will evolve in some way to address the discrepancy between expectation and practice as related to restoring the order of the sacraments.<sup>162</sup> The point, however, is not necessarily to determine the evolution at this time – only to highlight the ongoing pattern of dissonance and evolution within the history of Christian initiation.

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<sup>161</sup> Stella Marie Jeffrey, “Christian Initiation: A Pastoral Perspective on Restored Order,” *American Catholic Press*, [http://www.americancatholicpress.org/Stella\\_Marie\\_Jeffrey\\_Christian\\_Initiation.html](http://www.americancatholicpress.org/Stella_Marie_Jeffrey_Christian_Initiation.html). Jeffrey reflects on her own pastoral journey of implementing the new order in her own parish. She also participated in a survey of churches regarding whether they have changed the order of their sacraments. A table at the end of her article shows the vast majority of parishes have not restored the order of the sacraments and it seems “rife with practical challenges” that prevent them from doing so.

<sup>162</sup> This line of inquiry could prove an intriguing line of research for future considerations in the pattern of dissonance and evolution.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

With this survey of four eras of initiation in place and the pattern established, attention can now be turned to the particular form of dissonance highlighted in the introduction to this dissertation where initiates are disappearing from their parish context – often immediately following the end of their process. This reality creates tension on a number of levels of course – among parents, initiates, parish staff, etc. However, the specific form of discrepancy on which the next chapter focuses relates to the very essence of “initiation” as tension is created when the concept of initiation is compared to the observations of the fieldwork. The word “initiation”, as generally understood in sociology and anthropology, commonly includes ongoing community involvement as part of its definition – something lacking in this particular context – thus resulting in tension between the definition, official designation, and local expression of initiation in the Catholic Church in which initiates often no longer participate in the community.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Current Dissonance: Initiation and Lack of Incorporation*

#### I. Introduction

As we have seen in the opening chapter, tension between the institution organizing the ritual process of Catholic initiation and the individuals participating in this process is part of a long-standing pattern. The nature of the tension, the context in which it occurred, and the ways in which Catholic initiation has been negotiated varied across the eras; but some form of dissonance was consistently present. That there are discrepancies observed in the current fieldwork should therefore come as no surprise. The purpose of this chapter is to delineate the particular nature of the dissonance between institution and individual in the current Minneapolis context.

The dissonance in this case is not theological in nature, such as was present in the eras of Tertullian or Augustine; nor is it related to the orthopraxy of Luther and the Council of Trent in determining whether confirmation should be part of the initiation process. It is, instead, sociological in nature; that is, it is related to that which constitutes the essence of “initiation” and the expected behaviors of individuals associated with it. The sociological concept of initiation, as we shall see, commonly includes an ongoing, close-knit relationship between initiate and the community post-initiation; yet in Minneapolis, the opposite is increasingly the norm. Initiates commonly disappear from their parishes immediately following the initiation process. While this may have occurred in the past, the present level of leakage leads to a more specific discrepancy between individual and organization that is part of the overall pattern discussed in the first chapter.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>163</sup>Though not addressed until the following chapters, it is important to again note here the difference between the imagined community of the universal Catholic Church and the localized expressions of this community in individual parishes. As noted in the introduction, it is possible initiates may leave their local parish only to participate in another parish in a different part of the city, country, or world. Were that the case, there would be a lessening of the dissonance. However, we shall see, the Catholic Church – along with other mainline Christian churches – in America has been undergoing a significant decline in Mass attendance and parish participation

In describing this current dissonance, then, the bulk of this chapter is devoted to outlining concepts of initiation related to how “an ongoing community relationship” forms an important part of the definition of initiation as anthropologists and religious historians have commonly understood it. After this section, the chapter then briefly applies these general concepts of initiation to those of the Catholic Church in order to connect the two. This will demonstrate the overlap in perception, for the Church also assumes some form of ongoing participation at the end of the initiation process, a point indicated in the preceding chapter. This, then, is the basic point of the chapter – to set out and contrast an understanding of initiation within both academia and the Catholic Church that includes ongoing community relationships with a localized practice in which there are few, if any, such relationships post-ritual.

In so doing, the possible evolution of initiation that is part of the ongoing historical pattern will be bracketed for later discussion in the final chapter. At this point it is enough to say that given the Church’s understanding of initiation is somewhat similar to that commonly held within social science, the fact that initiated individuals are disappearing immediately following the ritual process may conceivably lead church practice to change – or it may further challenge the already somewhat stretched social science understanding of initiation. As we shall see, there are indeed hints of a possible evolutionary trajectory in the Minneapolis context, and chinks in the scientific armory. However, it is premature to discuss this until the dissonance is established in this chapter and the fieldwork chapters to follow. Therefore, attention remains in this chapter on what seems to be a common part of definitions of initiation.

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over the past half-century. This would suggest that “disappearing confirmands” are not simply attending other churches, but are no longer actively participating in any parish.

The discussion begins with prominent early sociologists such as James Frazer and Arnold van Gennep and their general understanding of initiation as including group incorporation. This thread continues through additional figures in sociology like Victor Turner and Catherine Bell in which we again see this common understanding. The discussion ends with a brief exposition of the church's understanding of incorporation. This process establishes a general concept of initiation and lays a foundation for the presentation of the fieldwork in the ensuing chapters in which we see the dissonance revealed in the high rates of attrition post-initiation

## II. Early Figures in Initiation Theory

### *James Frazer*

In describing Frazer's theory on initiation and concepts of incorporation, it is helpful to note he developed his work in the midst of an evolutionary bias in methodology.<sup>164</sup> Based on common assumptions in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that societies moved thorough higher and ever higher stages of "civility", Frazer believed humanity progressed through a "fixed sequence of stages: magic, religion, science" as a means of interacting with and explaining the world.<sup>165</sup> In this theory, early Greek thought represented higher forms of civilization since in them science increasingly explained that world phenomenon (which used to fall more under the purview of religion) in biological, philosophical, and astronomical terms.<sup>166</sup> As a result, he suggested that though modern initiation rituals may derive from early Greek forms, the observer firstly needs to consider more primitive cultures that survived early evolutionary

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<sup>164</sup> Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 2007), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=ApuE1tEMBuYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Western+Esotericism+and+Rituals+of+Initiation&hl=en&src=lmrr&ei=nGn2TfrwI6L00gGB6qDuDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=ApuE1tEMBuYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Western+Esotericism+and+Rituals+of+Initiation&hl=en&src=lmrr&ei=nGn2TfrwI6L00gGB6qDuDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 35.

<sup>165</sup> Randall Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=gg0iiE8UR10C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Making+Magic:+Religion,+Magic,+and+Science+in+the+Modern+World&hl=en&ei=A2r2Tc\\_FN-LZ0QHCq9juDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=gg0iiE8UR10C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Making+Magic:+Religion,+Magic,+and+Science+in+the+Modern+World&hl=en&ei=A2r2Tc_FN-LZ0QHCq9juDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 79.

<sup>166</sup> Bogdon, *Western*, 35.

movements and therefore echo the early moments in human history.<sup>167</sup> Only this perspective, he said, enables a fuller understanding of initiation, a view which led Frazer to conduct his research on and writing about primitive cultures in order to derive a host of universal information about humankind – including that which constituted concepts of initiation.

Based on his observations, Frazer argued that status change as the result of attaining “insider knowledge” and community affirmation was inherent in the earliest forms of initiation as societies attempted to control individual behavior. He wrote extensively of this in his best-known work, The Golden Bough, recounting what he learned about primitive African initiation patterns from the reports of missionaries and ethnographers. After giving several extended examples across various African contexts, Frazer then summarized the crucial commonality among them all:

The great point of agreement between all the West African secret societies lies in the method of initiation.....they (the initiates) always take on a new name and are supposed by the initiation process to become new beings in the magic wood....*They all learn*, to a certain extent, a new language, a secret language only understood by the initiated.<sup>168</sup>

Embedded in Frazer’s notion of initiation is the way secret societies develop their communal identity based on a shared sense of knowledge that, when learned, fully initiates the person into the existing social group. Learning such knowledge is a matter of gaining status, with initiates forming strong bonds of secrecy related to what they have just learned, maintaining and usually expending these in an ongoing set of relationships. The strength of the bonds related to the secret knowledge is so profound, and the knowledge so fiercely guarded, that should an outsider or the uninitiated attempt to learn the secrets they may

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<sup>167</sup> Bogden, *Western*, 36.

<sup>168</sup> James Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London: MacMillan and Company, 1913), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=REVXAVxJu7QC&pg=frontcover&dq=frazer+golden+bough+african+initiation+patterns&hl=en&ei=12r2TdSbOqnm0QH3vtDrDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=REVXAVxJu7QC&pg=frontcover&dq=frazer+golden+bough+african+initiation+patterns&hl=en&ei=12r2TdSbOqnm0QH3vtDrDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 259.

immediately be killed.<sup>169</sup> Such knowledge is not meant for the self-realization of each individual, but for the survival and perpetuation of the group.

Bonds formed in the initiation process then extend beyond the initiated community to daily relational life as the novices enter into the broader community web of relationships tightly woven together by community expectations. In the example of clans on the Gold Coast, Frazer highlights the stringent rules that govern the relational lives of the initiated clan members – including the fact that a man may not have sexual intercourse with a woman of the same clan as himself, palm wine cannot be drunk on Tuesdays, and clan members may be expected to help pay each other's debts.<sup>170</sup> Punitive measures such as excommunication or death await those who deviate from these restrictions.

To be initiated in primitive African culture then means, according to Frazer, that one's life is governed by these learnt rules of society as one continues to interact with the community. This initiation assumes a context of ongoing relationships within a society that introduces secret knowledge, affirmed in the initiation ritual, which both confirms and affirms the social restrictions, obligations and benefits that govern everyday life. Without this ongoing community interaction, Frazer's concept of initiation would make little sense. Clearly for this early social science writer, initiation inevitably assumes a community context in which the initiates continue to develop their relationships through regular and mutual interactions. This notion of initiation is also shared by the next major figure of this era, Arnold Van Gennep.

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>170</sup> James Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy* (Edinburgh, R&R Clark, 1910), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=9nsQYKLCjIMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Totemism+and+Exogamy&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=V2v2TaCUCsKCtgff14TrBg&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=9nsQYKLCjIMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Totemism+and+Exogamy&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=V2v2TaCUCsKCtgff14TrBg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 559-561.



### ***Arnold Van Gennep***

Van Gennep, as Frazer, conducted his research and constructed his models when initiation theory was still emerging in the discipline; yet he remains one of the more influential figures. Similar too was his epistemological approach to developing his theoretical constructs. He readily moved across time and culture, swiftly asserting similarities among various people groups in different eras of history with an élan from which later scholars shrank in some horror.<sup>171</sup> Yet within his context, he was meticulous. According to Van Gennep, the careful scholar could --- through the process of direct observation – suggest conclusions that had implications beyond the immediate context.<sup>172</sup> This becomes important in that Van Gennep's views on initiation were “meta-cultural” in nature, based on the assumption that concepts and definitions related to initiation should have some measure of commonality. A core point was that ongoing community relationships are essential and common to any initiation concepts.

In order to develop his overall thought, Van Gennep conducted brief ethnographic work in Algeria, but then primarily relied upon reports from missionaries and world travelers who had spent time among ‘primitive people’. On this basis, Van Gennep developed his well-known ritual theory that all rites of passage – including initiation – shared the same three-stage phenomena of “separation,” “transition” and “reincorporation.” Van Gennep appealed to an “(implicit) fact of existence” in his claim that life is made up of a series of successive stages with similar ends and beginnings, and that there are ceremonies to “enable the individual to pass” from one defined position in a social setting to another.<sup>173</sup> Common to all

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<sup>171</sup> However, he clearly did his work prior to full-fledged relativism in which universal claims were viewed with skepticism.

<sup>172</sup> Rosemary Zumwalt, “Arnold Van Gennep: The Hermit of Bourg-la-Reine,” *American Anthropologist* 84, (1982): 9, <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/commissions/centennial/history/090vannep.pdf>. Page numbers on pdf. online version do not match the print journal version.

<sup>173</sup> Arnold Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge, 2004), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=kJpkBH7mB7oC&printsec=frontcover&dq=rites+of+passage&hl=en&ei=0dH2Tez5GJSz0AHXoLmpCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=kJpkBH7mB7oC&printsec=frontcover&dq=rites+of+passage&hl=en&ei=0dH2Tez5GJSz0AHXoLmpCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 10.

these “passings” – whether it be birth, childhood initiation, marriage, pregnancy, or death – are ceremonies in which the individual is removed from the community, undergoes a transition time in which the old identity “dies”, and then re-emerges into the society in a different role, social status, and/or function.<sup>174</sup>

Van Gennep articulated this theory in the 1909 work, The Rites of Passage, where he devotes an extensive section to initiation ritual within the community. In his discussion, he shares Frazer’s view that initiation commonly results in a change of status with new privileges and responsibilities. The specific form and function of this identity and privilege will vary according to the variables of culture, setting, and time, *but the notion of a participant relating within the context in which they are initiated remains fixed*. Van Gennep’s notion of initiation assumes ongoing communal participation in some form regardless of the place or practical constitution of the ritual itself.

This dialectic of fixed ontology and ritual variability can be seen in Van Gennep’s analysis of the specific initiation ceremonies different cultures employ. In examining rituals of mutilation, for example, Van Gennep argues that though the form of mutilation differs according to context, the “fixed” result revolves around the “individual (being) removed from the common mass of humanity through the rite of separation which automatically incorporates him into a *defined group*.”<sup>175</sup> Therefore, for Van Gennep the specific form of the initiation ritual is unimportant; circumcision in Judaism, pulling a tooth in Australia, cutting off the little finger in South Africa, tattoos, ear lobe perforating, etc. all symbolize solidarity within a defined social group, and “the *incorporation is permanent*.”<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 3. Van Gennep attempts to solidify his claims on page 3 of this text by appealing to the nature of the universe itself that “is governed by a periodicity which has repercussions on human life, with stages and transitions, movements forward and periods of relative inactivity.”

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

This incorporation into a defined social group becomes the critical function of initiation in that meaning is produced and reproduced within a culture through its various practices, phenomena and activities while providing individuals meaningful status within the boundaries of their society.<sup>177</sup> When an individual participates in an initiation ritual, therefore, they are participating in more than just a single ritual – they are furthering the long-term stability of the group, its meta-narrative of myth and ritual, and the subsequent stages of the development of their own identity as defined by the group. Their new identity with new responsibilities perpetuates the meaning, values, belief, and ritual from generation to generation. This is the purpose of initiation, and it is anchored in the necessity of ongoing societal relationships in order to further the future of the society.

Ultimately, Van Gennep's theory of separation, transition, and reincorporation inherently includes within the definition of initiation some form of ongoing relational interactions with the community as separation and reincorporation in initiation requires a community from which to be separated and reincorporated. Such concepts form the basis of initiatory theory in its earliest era, the foundation on which further ideas are built over the next fifty years as seen in the works of two additional anthropological figures: E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Victor Turner.

### ***E.E. Evans-Pritchard***

Unlike Van Gennep who relied mostly on second-hand reports, E.E. Evans-Pritchard conducted extensive research among African tribes, analyzing magic, ritual, and initiation in the Southern Sudan. In his observations, Evans-Pritchard develops the common theme that initiation occurs in the midst of a relational setting and concludes with the novice being

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<sup>177</sup> Anne Nicotera and others, *Understanding Organizations Through Culture and Structure* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers, 2003), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=adq0YT0M6AQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Understanding+Organizations+Through+Culture+and+Structure&hl=en&ei=HNL2TaTNFKXW0QGMqpiJCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=res ult&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=adq0YT0M6AQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Understanding+Organizations+Through+Culture+and+Structure&hl=en&ei=HNL2TaTNFKXW0QGMqpiJCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=res ult&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 9.

integrated into the community with a new status or identity. The society forms the hub of the daily relational existence in which status and responsibilities are recognized and affirmed, and demonstrates again that initiation absent of ongoing community seems contradictory.

Among the Nuer, Evans-Pritchard analyzed the strength of the lineage system and presented the relational ties in a series of diagrams. Represented graphically, each clan is made up of a system of lineages, all of which claimed initial “patrilineal descent” (the maximal lineage) from the founding ancestor titled, A.<sup>178</sup> From A, clans descend into minor lineages B, C, D, etc. (depending on the number of sons of A), and then into even smaller minimal lineages of families originating from a “pivotal ancestor at an appropriate level of the genealogy.”<sup>179</sup> These minimal systems are finally each further divided into tight, mother child-relationships as understood in the Nuer concept of “maar” which represents the strength of the mother-child bond and the depth of the lineage according to an original point in time.<sup>180</sup>

Within this disparate sociological web there may be antagonism between members of the various minor and minimal lineages – disagreements and divisions among lines B and C perhaps. However, antagonisms are set aside in a presentation of unity when clans discuss their relationships with outsiders as individual members identify themselves as descendants from maximal lineage A so as to demonstrate their solidarity. Evans-Pritchard goes on to point out that it is not so much the immediate lineage that is evoked in such cases, not so

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<sup>178</sup> Adam Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1983), 92.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Sharon E. Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas; Coping with Money, War, and the State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=WMFtmRKB6iYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Nuer+Dilemmas;+Coping+with+Money,+War,+and+the+State&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=utL2TeSuE-rv0gG1uvy0Cw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=WMFtmRKB6iYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Nuer+Dilemmas;+Coping+with+Money,+War,+and+the+State&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=utL2TeSuE-rv0gG1uvy0Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 179.

much the individuals as actors, but the overarching, shared values among the tribe form the relational framework working “at a level of values instead of crude demography.”<sup>181</sup>

This sense of clan identity therefore remains quite strong because of the macro-values among the overall community, inculcated through enculturation and initiation, which help to maintain the group, even if there are inter-lineage struggles. Evans-Pritchard discussed the strength of these in his presidential address, “Some Features of the Nuer Religion,” in which he provides an in-depth summary of the value/morality ties among the Nuer. These ties are so deeply entrenched that, when combined with tribal conceptions of God, the daily behavior of the Nuer people is governed at nearly every level by the community. These strong relational ties created by the macro-values are critical to concepts of initiation in that each clan individual is subordinated to the group. Evans-Pritchard writes:

If a man wishes to be in the right with God he must be in the right with men, that is, he *must subordinate his interests as an individual to the moral order of society*....If an individual fails to observe the rules he is, Nuer say, *yong*, crazy, because he not only loses the support of kith and kin but also the favour of God, so that retribution in some form or another and sooner or later is bound to follow.<sup>182</sup>

Nuer initiation therefore happens in the context of high social control in which deviance in morality and choice is met with tribal retribution; an agreed passage into adult membership status is thus a must in order to ensure one’s personal survival. To facilitate this, the adolescents are taken outside of the tribal context and into the liminal space where they undergo their ritual of initiation, the primary feature of which is the scarification of the novice across his forehead in various patterns according to tribal identity and minimal lineages.<sup>183</sup> The permanent and clearly raised scarring is part of an elaborate ceremony that, when completed, recognizes the novice as fully integrated and subject to the expectations that

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<sup>181</sup> Kuper, *Anthropology*, 92.

<sup>182</sup> E.E. Evans-Pritchard, “Some Features of the Nuer Religion (a Presidential Address),” *Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 81, No. 1/2 (1951): 13. Italics mine.  
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.bethel.edu/stable/2844013>.

<sup>183</sup> Jean LaFontaine, *Initiation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 111.

they will indeed, as Evans-Pritchard suggests, “subordinate their interests to the moral order of society.”

In Evans-Pritchard’s thought and context on tribal initiation rituals, then, one can see that in the context of the intricate sociological webs and the strength of unity, Nuer members are expected to have ongoing relationships within their communities after their initiation. The initiate’s sustenance and very existence is governed by the tribe through recognition of an initiate’s status. Therefore, the concept of initiation as including ongoing community relationships is again demonstrated in the review of Evans-Pritchard’s work among the Nuer in which such relational ties are extremely strong post-initiation.

### ***Victor Turner***

Like Evans-Pritchard, Victor Turner conducted extensive research in the field as observed initiation practices among the Ndembu tribe in Central Africa. In his work, he affirmed the universal three-fold ritualistic structure suggested by Van Gennep, but chose to focus primarily on the “separation” phase which he defined as the “liminal” space. Here the initiate is neither what they were or yet what they will be when they are given new status in the tribe. This liminal space for an individual is the rough equivalent of the chrysalis phase for a caterpillar/butterfly. While in the cocoon, the formless mass is no longer a caterpillar, nor is it yet a butterfly – it is in the “betwixt and between” phase of its development.<sup>184</sup> Likewise, initiates who have been pulled from their mothers and families go into a “chrysalis” experience in which they are no longer children, but not yet adult members of the tribe.

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<sup>184</sup> Victor Turner, *Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=62bKQB5xEo0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=forest+of+symbols&hl=en&ei=09f2TZKpOdGy0AH3qrSZCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=62bKQB5xEo0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=forest+of+symbols&hl=en&ei=09f2TZKpOdGy0AH3qrSZCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 97.

Turner's writing on this liminal space became the defining concept in his discussion of initiation. According to his observations, unique relational dynamics occur during this time as initiates often experience new, spontaneous and deep relational bonds with one another in their journeys through initiation. It is a community experience unlike any other in society, and Turner labeled these newly formed groups but temporary agglomerations, the *communitas*, about which he writes,

(Communitas) emerges recognizably in the liminal period, (and) is (a) society unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or equal communion of equal individuals who submit to the general authority of the ritual elders.<sup>185</sup>

The *communitas* that emerges is an “anti-structure” to the hierarchical system of politics and economics found in society at large in which relational norms, commerce structures, and ritual practices prevail as prescribed explicitly or more usually implicitly, by the people of power. Members of the community interact according to their societal status. By contrast, those in *communitas* represent a community of equal individuals – formed of unified, “flattened” relationships.<sup>186</sup> The result of these two juxtaposed relational experiences is a collection of people whose “social life is a type of dialectical process that involves successive experience of high and low, *communitas* and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, equality and inequality.”<sup>187</sup>

The movement from lower to higher status in the tribe, then, is through the ritual process of initiation. The novices carry with them into their initiation a certain status and identity which is then cast aside causing them to become “statusless” as they move towards the liminal space.<sup>188</sup> As the initiates gather together, they begin to bond in this “betwixt and

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<sup>185</sup> Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure* (Piscataway: Aldine Transaction, 1995), 96.

<sup>186</sup> Mathieu Deflam, “Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner's Processual Symbolic Analysis,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30, no. 1 (1991): 15, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.webfeat.lib.ed.ac.uk/stable/1387146>.

<sup>187</sup> Turner, *Ritual*, 97.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

between” *communitas*, and their identity is reshaped in preparation for a different and very definite role in the fixed structure of their social group. This occurs primarily through a series of rituals that may include dances, “death experiences”, piercings, circumcision, or other practices.

It is critical to note here for the purposes of this chapter that though such rituals occur in a different context from normal societal life, they are still intimately tied to overall structures as “neophytes (are expected to submit) to an authority that is nothing less than that of the total community.” The community is considered to be the “repository of the whole gamut of the culture’s values, norms, attitudes, sentiments, and relationships.”<sup>189</sup> The traditions and values of the community therefore inform and give boundaries for the initiate’s experience as the “neophyte is reshaped or molded physically and psychologically so that society’s values can be inscribed on his or her body and mind.”<sup>190</sup> The following descriptions provide a concrete example of this theory as applied to the initiation ritual for Ndembu girls:

### Separation

The ritual consists of laying the girl initiate under a milk tree in the woods, a tree that represents the matrilineage of the tribe. For a whole day, the village women dance around her as she lies covered with a blanket. At evening she is picked up by her “midwife” instructress (for she is like a baby to be born) and carried pick-a-back with a dancing step, amid a bunched crowd of women, around the village plaza, and into her seclusion hut.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Fiona Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, 2006), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=PJMpgRXpZWMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Anthropology+of+Religion&hl=en&ei=Gdz2TdGnG8Tu0gHbvGKCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=PJMpgRXpZWMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Anthropology+of+Religion&hl=en&ei=Gdz2TdGnG8Tu0gHbvGKCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 155.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Edith Turner, “Reenactment of Traditional Rites of Passage,” in *Crossroads: The Quest for Contemporary Rites of Passage*, ed. Louise Carus Mahdi, Nancy Guyer Christopher, and Michael Meade (Peru: Open Court Publishing, 1996), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=Ol9ypL99JQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Louise+Mahdi.+Crossroads:+The+Quest+for+Contemporary+Rites+of+Passage&hl=en&ei=i9z2Ta\\_MAcTL0QHU0bGvCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Ol9ypL99JQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Louise+Mahdi.+Crossroads:+The+Quest+for+Contemporary+Rites+of+Passage&hl=en&ei=i9z2Ta_MAcTL0QHU0bGvCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 278. For Turner, this rite of passage is indispensable for the stability of the Ndembu social structure in which there is a basic conflict between *matriliny*, the significance of matrilineal descent groups and kinship links, and *virilocality*, the principle that a woman goes to live with in her husband’s village away from her matrilineal kin. The very identity of a Ndembu woman is changed, therefore, in marriage as the woman is removed from her centralized focal community of other women and into a more subservient role as wife and mother. This shift of identity could threaten the stabilized structure of the whole, and it is thus incumbent upon the instructress to prepare the



### **Liminal Instruction and Reaggregation**

After three months of training in dance and sexual proficiency, she makes her debut as a grown woman. ....She is decorated with many beads and an earthen crown, feasted, and is led like a spirit into the crowd from an unexpected direction. Her dance before them all is the great moment of her life.<sup>192</sup>

In this puberty ritual, the nubile girls are deliberately and voluntarily removed from others in order to ultimately contribute to the ongoing stabilization of society. Their disorientation in the liminal period becomes a reorientation towards the utilitarian good of the community. This is the central concern of female and male initiation ritual for the Ndembu – to further the well-being of the community through submission to the governing norms. The change in status for the women means that they will take on new responsibilities vital to the ongoing life of the community.

In this context, reaggregation and subsequent participation is assumed as part of the initiation ritual – a ritual that would make little sense without it, for it has been created and authorized by and for the community. Therefore, Turner’s work, revolving around the concepts of liminality and *communitas* again exemplifies the fact that an “initiation ritual” intrinsically includes the pragmatic dimension of ongoing societal participation. This is simply part of a common understanding of initiation rituals as shared by those who have studied initiation before Turner such as Frazer, Van Gennep, Evans-Pritchard and their followers.

To summarize, the four anthropological figures outlined above are among the seminal figures in initiation theory. Though this cursory review does not delve deeply into the sheer breadth and depth of their influence, it does serve to elicit a working definition of initiation that includes, in all four cases, a post-initiation lifetime assimilation into the community. It is

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woman for her new life during this liminal period of *communitas* in the betwixt and between.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

assumed that initiates who participate in the ritual process receive a new status in their society, are fully integrated in that status, and continue to hold the values, traditions, and myths of the community as central to their identity. This is how the community is perpetuated.

I do not wish to imply here that alternatives were never seen, variations in ritual or outcome unknown, or changes over time impossible. Rather I am suggesting that progress through life involved markers of entitlement to the assets and the advantages of the community relevant to each stage of life, and the marker for initiation for juveniles transiting to adulthood was especially important. Unless it was done, full membership benefits were not available, and that was the main point of doing them. Certainly such rituals may have involved excitement, danger, respect, gifts: but such outcomes (for men at least) could equally and more easily have been gained by hunting. The initiation of juveniles into adult membership was done in order that they could to partake in the fruits of that membership, and also that the community organizing the event would, in a sense, put its mark on the initiate for its future use.

Therefore, it would be a departure from the norm if, for some reason, an initiate left the community immediately following their initiation. If a high percentage of individuals left the community, there would be more significant sociological tension – particularly if values and relationships are either overtly rejected, subtly disregarded or subsumed under individualistically-derived values. The survival of the community might also be threatened as in normal circumstances (setting aside conquest or in-migration) it cannot perpetuate its existence without the younger generations. This picture, drawn from everyday social life, relates rather well to the kind of dissonance that currently exists, as we shall see in more detail, in these local parishes of the Catholic Church in Minnesota.

Yet we cannot go directly to this issue, for ritual theory by no means stopped with the early death of Victor Turner. He was, it will be remembered, still thinking in terms of bounded groups, albeit with temporary outburst of spontaneous *communitas*, and this hardly fits expectations of social life in 21<sup>st</sup> century Minneapolis or, for that matter, Lusaka. Before reflecting on what looks like neatly overlapping conceptual understanding of initiation among anthropologists and churchmen, we need to consider more recent initiation theory over the past few decades as we draw closer to the current context. Mircea Eliade, Catherine Bell, and, in particular, Ronald Grimes have all written significant recent texts on initiation, Grimes focusing especially on American culture with his texts for personalized initiation events.

### **III. Recent Figures in Initiation Theory**

#### ***Mircea Eliade***

Unlike the first four figures, Eliade is not an anthropologist, but a historian of religion. Nonetheless, his views on initiation theory are helpful in that they provide a slightly different lens through which to view initiation while yet maintaining the incorporation dimension. Eliade places initiation amongst his well-known juxtaposition of the sacred and profane within ritual and societal life. The purpose of the initiation ritual according to Eliade is not so much to introduce initiates to cultural values and tribal language, but rather to spiritual revelations such as the pervading sacred myths of cultural gods, the origins of the world, the meta-narrative of the group, human sexuality, and death.<sup>193</sup> He admits variability in these spiritual revelations according to the traditions of any given group in history but, like the previous anthropologists, his ontology of initiation remains. Eliade writes:

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<sup>193</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and the Profane* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1987), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=zBzzv977CLgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Sacred+and+the+Profane&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=Dd72TevGMePr0gH5oLCtCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=zBzzv977CLgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Sacred+and+the+Profane&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=Dd72TevGMePr0gH5oLCtCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 188.

There (are) passage rites at birth, at marriage, at death, and it could be said each of these cases *always* involves an initiation, for *each of them implies a radical change in ontological and social status*.....<sup>194</sup>

One of the more unique examples of Eliade's theory of initiation revolves around the Siberian Shaman rituals. Eliade describes the process in which an ordinary member of the culture takes on the extraordinary role of the shaman. Prior to initiation, the shaman is a member of the social group who seems to experience "the sacred with greater intensity than the rest of the community – those who, as it were, incarnate the sacred...."<sup>195</sup> At this point, there is a certain "inevitability" in which the fledgling shaman does not have the capacity to reject his inner sight, the unique gifts, or the inner call to a life of mediation between the sacred in the profane.<sup>196</sup> Once accepted, the shaman enters into a solitary journey of removal from society and into a season of liminality in which alternate states of consciousness are achieved as the shaman experiences a fundamental dissolution or "death" of his personality and previous way of life.<sup>197</sup> The Shaman is then reborn in a new state, having learned the dimensions of the sacred while becoming the incarnate mediator of the realms of gods and ancestors for the community.

What makes this initiation ritual somewhat unique when compared with the previous figures is its solitary nature. Most initiation rituals assume communal instruction – typically from the elders – with an entire group of initiates such as those that form the *communitas* for Turner. The group then all carries a new status into corporate life in which they join the community who shares that status. For the shaman, however, their process and change of

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 184. Italics mine.

<sup>195</sup> Robert E. Ryan, *The Strong Eye of Shamanism: A Journey Into the Caves of Consciousness* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 1999), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=11Em3BOTTUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Strong+Eye+of+Shamanism&hl=en&ei=WN72TdrvLKHx0gH0wvWYCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=11Em3BOTTUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Strong+Eye+of+Shamanism&hl=en&ei=WN72TdrvLKHx0gH0wvWYCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 61.

<sup>196</sup> A shamanic calling is inescapable, one cannot refuse it. There can be other ways to receive the call, but this is most common.

<sup>197</sup> Ryan, *Eye*, 67.

status makes them stand apart as different among their people; and while they play a vital role necessary for the stability of the community, they are decidedly outside the usual practices of daily life. They are made holy, unique, and able to live in a wholly different manner as compared to the culture at large.

However, even in this form of initiation the shaman is expected to participate in some meaningful way in the social group, and not to do so would make a mockery, indeed a nonsense, of the ritual, which is done on behalf of and for the benefit of the community. She or he is initiated individually as a shaman solely in order to participate in a manner appropriate to the new status in the group. *Without the ongoing social context and its normative way of life to give contrast to the shaman, his or her initiation ritual is meaningless.* There would be no tribe or social group whom the shaman can instruct in the ways of the sacred, and no patient to be healed. Thus, even in this Eliadean variant of initiatory ritual, we see both that the sacred is part of the profane and the necessity of some form of ongoing participation in a social group. That there is, as Eliade articulated, a “change in social status” implies that there is a social setting in which that change is embedded regardless of the form of the ritual.

### ***Catherine Bell***

Moving back into the realm of anthropology, Catherine Bell deserves contemporary attention because of her seminal works on ritual theory in modern culture and the sense in which she discusses ongoing community as part of her initiation theory. One of her main texts, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, redefined ritual as a series of practices taking place within the main flow of everyday life as the “basic social act.”<sup>198</sup> Bell’s theory attempts to find a middle way between classifying rituals as a set of separate, paradigmatic activities on one end of the societal spectrum versus a set of qualities found in all repetitive activities

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<sup>198</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 54.

without distinguishing features on the opposing end. She states ritual must always be seen in its overall, “real context” or within the full range of activities in a culture to determine how a given ritual distinguishes itself from other activities. Once this occurs, one can subsequently analyze the ritual according to its purpose.<sup>199</sup>

As the distinguishing marks of a given ritual gain traction in a culture, the ritual and its purpose becomes more compelling to a greater numbers and more people increasingly participate in its “distinguished activity.” Ultimately, the ritual participant in ritualized behavior is attempting “a strategic way of acting effectively” within social orders as she or he is forming values, identities, and mechanisms of relational negotiation.<sup>200</sup> One example of this would be the increasing adoption of English shorthand in text messaging among American professionals as they use their Blackberry mobile phones.<sup>201</sup> Such professionals have constructed an entirely new language they daily transmit through their mobile phones. To participate in this daily ritual requires one to understand the symbols and use this form of communication on an ongoing basis.

Within this description of how all rituals encompass everyday life in general, Bell offers her specific contribution to initiation theory by discussing how initiation helps form the values and identity of individuals who participate in rituals sanctioned by the wider society. Bell addresses various coming-of-age ceremonies as part of rites of passage in general, and her analysis and summary of initiation also assumes the community dimension inherent in any initiation ritual, as it is the *community* that recognizes the validity of any given ritual. She writes:

Life cycle rituals seem to proclaim that the biological order is less determinative than the social. Physical birth is one thing; being identified and properly accepted as a member of

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>201</sup> Blackberry sales in the USA have grown by the millions over the past ten years and ritual adopters have integrated a new language into their daily lives. This language stands apart from more common forms of spoken and written communication.

the social group is another....*only the community confers that recognition and it does so in its own time.*<sup>202</sup>

In her widest ranging excerpt, Bell discusses the validity of the Van Gennep three-stage model when applied across time, cultures, and contexts. She first cites the ancient baptismal ritual as having a “distinct framework of initiation into a community,”<sup>203</sup> and then refers to the modern various clubs, fraternities and secret societies that put “neophytes” through different forms of hazing and ritual that are also meant to bring people into the group. Bell then applies these initiation concepts to 19<sup>th</sup> century secret Chinese societies (Triads), US Marine boot camps, and initiation in Zen monasteries....after which each kind of “recruit” is given a new identity and community relationships.<sup>204</sup>

She then describes the specific relationship between the community and initiate after initiation as involving the negotiation of hierarchy and power inherent in any social structure, arguing that in initiation there is both a resistance to the hierarchical power and an acceptance of the social norms created by this power. Initiation, therefore, results in a “redemptive hegemony” in which the ritual actor is “empowered by the schemes of the ritual” even while their dispositions are molded to be effective in the world of their experience and socialized body.<sup>205</sup> As this redemptive hegemonic interplay between actor and community takes place, there is room for both internal resistance (individual autonomy) and the required external consent to the community at large.

After the ritual is completed, the initiate is recognized by the “socialized body” as having acquired a change of status. The boot camp neophyte becomes a US Marine complete with regalia and an official ceremony. A Zen Buddhist takes on the responsibilities of the monastery. A confirmand will take in the body and blood of Christ with fellow community

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<sup>202</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 94.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 115

members. Though there is variability in any ritual or form of initiation, the theoretical construct Bell offers and the examples she uses demand the inclusion of a community or social dimension regardless of how the ritual is practiced or conceived. Without the ongoing social context, an initiation ritual would make little sense. Therefore, even as Bell offers unique insights into initiation theory, initiation still requires ongoing community participation as part of its intrinsic nature.

### ***Ronald Grimes***

The final contributor to the discussion, Grimes' contributions places initiation in the individualistic context of larger Western societies such as Minneapolis. This is particularly important in that individual empowerment is, as we shall see, deeply embedded into the sociological fabric of the western suburbs of Minneapolis, factors into the dissonance, and is an important part for understanding the tentative processes by which churches are increasingly individualizing their initiation process. Additionally, in a departure from previous theoreticians, Grimes argues for initiation *without* ongoing community. This assertion is in stark contrast with Richard Rohr's claims as outlined in the introduction regarding America's failure to initiate. Rohr argues, "A young man needs a valued group, a community on which he has claims and that has claims on him."<sup>206</sup> Because of his unique views, therefore, the treatment of Grimes here is rather fuller than the previous figures.

In *Deeply Into the Bone*, Grimes provides an analysis of how initiation in North America has been deeply affected by individualistic tendencies and personal choice. In communal societies, people have little choice but to participate in an initiation process as rejecting it would amount to exiling oneself from the community. However, in contexts where personal autonomy is among the highest values, initiations, including reintegration, are

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<sup>206</sup> Richard Rohr, *On the Threshold of Transformations* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=2a4y69hSdDkC&printsec=frontcover&dq=On+the+Threshold+of+Transformations&hl=en&ei=Tt\\_2TZyzF\\_Sx0AGdr7DYCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=2a4y69hSdDkC&printsec=frontcover&dq=On+the+Threshold+of+Transformations&hl=en&ei=Tt_2TZyzF_Sx0AGdr7DYCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 45.



functionally optional. Deciding for oneself is seen as being of supreme importance, and questioning an institution is encouraged. If an individual can question, therefore, an individual can choose, and if one can choose, one can reject – yet one may still do the ritual for what the participant sees as personal advantage.<sup>207</sup> This emerging social dynamic, according to Grimes, has resulted in the failure of modern societies like America to initiate their youth – a failure which he cites in the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* as necessitating urgent global action:

Young people are unable to participate in society in a creative manner because societal structures no longer consider it their responsibility to intentionally establish the necessary marks of passing from one age-related social role to another.....the result is that society has no clear expectation of how people should participate in these roles and therefore individuals do not know what is required by society.<sup>208</sup>

Because of this failure, Grimes calls for a reconstitution of initiation in the North American contexts. He considers Van Gennep and Eliade foundational and fundamental to the discussion, but believes both to be misguided in their claims that initiation patterns can be trans-historical and meta-cultural because, he says, initiation is too complex and too particular.<sup>209</sup> He warns against “oversimplification into memorable patterns,” and outlines twenty-six different nuances and characteristics of ritual present in Van Gennep and Eliade that may or may not be part of a given social setting.<sup>210</sup> Thus, he implies, Van Gennep and Eliade have more or less invented or imposed models of initiation, rather than discovering them. This is critical in that if that is the case, the definition of initiation can evolve to fit the

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<sup>207</sup> Ronald Grimes, *Deeply Into the Bone* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2000), 90. E-book, no link.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 100. As part of the research process, I contacted Maurice Bloch, an anthropologist at the University of London, regarding his views on initiation theory and incorporation. Bloch seems to share some measure commonality with Grimes’ assertion as he wrote in an e-mail to me that “there can be no hard and fast patterns of initiation.”

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 107.

social phenomena of modern societies better – especially in societies in which people leave the community of their initiation.<sup>211</sup> He writes:

The task of reinventing initiation requires not only the construction of ritual, it also requires the reconstitution of community.....Traditional initiations are done by elders and initiates are incorporated into their own communities. In today's world, we are faced not only with fantasized, unconscious, and peer initiations but also with cross-cultural ones....Like the numerous wilderness-experience initiations that have sprung up in North America, these are initiates that *do not eventuate in ongoing community*.....It is common to hear both clergy and scholars denying that peer initiations, cross-cultural initiations, and initiations without community are real rites. But excluding such practices by definition does not make them go away...<sup>212</sup>

At first glance, Grimes' claims appear to resolve the tension present in Catholic initiation in which initiates are leaving the community. The dynamics of "leaving" the community is a reflection of cultural individualism in which a person can imagine themselves as part of the universal Catholic Church – thus they are initiated – while not participating in its local expression with all its demands. More will be said on the concept of the "imagined community" in the ensuing chapter; but at this point Grimes' objections to traditional concepts of initiation can be critically evaluated.

Firstly, it is correct to state that participants do not continue in relationship with one another beyond the wilderness experience of initiation. Relational bonding during the ritual does happen and is the functional equivalent of Turner's *communitas* as spontaneous community erupts among those removed from the norms of daily society. However, when the experience ends, the "initiates" return back to their disconnected social settings. There is no common community to which they return and no ongoing community formed among those who have been through the experience; they are not initiated into a wilderness community.

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

However, the lack of a specific, common community shared by those who have gone through the ritual does not negate the profound community dimension actively involved in the ritual. Those participating in the wilderness experience are often sent with the explicit sanction of the community of their family, school, or church, and great care is taken with the initiates when they return. In describing the critical reincorporation process that is intentionally part of the wilderness experience, John Davis writes:

**Incorporation:** The young people returned to a council of witnesses at the school, which included the teachers, their parents, and several trainees. During this council each told his or her story of living alone. The witnessing “elders” responded by identifying the beauty and the gifts inherent in the young persons’ stories. The parents were also given the opportunity to respond to the stories of their children. Gifts were exchanged and the young people were empowered to live their lives as prefigured by their stories. (Three days) The film is addressed to young people nearing the age of adulthood who are looking for meaningful (and legal) ways of marking or confirming their ability to live their lives as adults in modern culture. The three phase process they undergo was used for thousands of years by indigenous cultures to bring children through the passage into adulthood. The film is not just for teenagers about to leave home, but for their parents, who must let them go to live their own lives, and for those who are seeking ways to verify that the young people in a community are ready to put on the mantle of maturity.<sup>213</sup>

Here the wilderness experience is revealed as a “sub-contracted” initiation experience that is explicitly “blessed” by the sending community, itself a tightly defined sub-set of the region, the city, the town, the institution. The community itself does not have an appealing rite of passage, nor perhaps the capacity to create one. Therefore, they utilize the resources of the wilderness experience and approve of its methodology for carrying the adolescent into a functioning adult. The initiate is meant to return to her or his “sending” community and live in the relational context of its norms, values and structures – at least to some degree. The wilderness experience does not eventuate an ongoing community with fellow initiates and their families. Yet it does result in a change of status within the sending community *as long*

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<sup>213</sup> John Davis, “Lost Borders. Coming of Age in the Wilderness,” 1998, <http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/guides/lostguide.pdf>.

*as that lasts*, although given the self-selected nature of that community, the level of choice and mobility that may not be long. The initiates (unlike the Catholic parish) all come from disparate, disconnected contexts and are not expected to be in relationship before or after the initiation. However, each returns to her or his small-group context until they move on. Thus, even such wilderness experiences may to an extent fulfill the historical criterion for an initiation ritual: ongoing participation within a social context. The core problem is that the social context itself may dissolve, for it does not exist much before the ritual initiation and may not afterwards.

That said, it is theoretically possible for an individual without friends, family, church, or school to pay for and participate on their own in a wilderness experience without this “sending community” dimension. Grimes characterizes the peoples of North American culture as centrally individualistic and longing for the “promise of adult identity and spiritual competence. Among people who hold such a longing, initiation does not require solidarity with ancestors or increased social responsibility, but is rather a means of personal growth and self-enhancement.”<sup>214</sup>

This potential shift in initiation to include, or even be defined by, self-enhancement is an important point. In fact, as we shall see, this individualized element seems to be increasingly evident in Catholic initiation in Minneapolis. The directors of initiation who participated in the interviews reported a growing emphasis on connecting confirmation with an individual’s lifelong journey of faith while seeming to subordinate a sense of responsibility to the Catholic institution and its community. This is part of the growing trend of individualized faith as described by Grimes and seen in the field work, and it seems to manifest itself in how churches, both Protestant and Catholic, compete for the attention of the individual as a means of contributing to their faith journey for personal growth.

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<sup>214</sup> Grimes, *Deeply*, 112.

However, given the understanding of initiation as outlined in the key figures of this chapter, there is an important difference between personal growth and true initiation – a difference embedded in Grimes’ statement above in which the focus is on the “self.”

Initiation has commonly assumed a community that recognizes and affirms the status of the individual as part of the reincorporation process. Without this external source of recognition like a community which sets the “constitutive rules that determine the identity of the (ritual) acts, even one whose existence may be fleeting, there is no initiation.”<sup>215</sup> In her article, *Rights of Passage*, Malidoma Some highlights the necessity of the community dimension, and implicitly opposes Grimes, when she writes:

I don't know yet what the content of American initiation will be, but I do know what it's going to look like. It has to have a moment of separation from the family and the community. It has to happen in nature and be a genuinely challenging ordeal. Whatever the initiates feel before entering this cycle must be deepened to the point of transcendence, giving them the opportunity to feel whole. *Finally, and most importantly, there has to be a strong community ready to welcome the survivors of the ordeal.* This welcoming must be massive, not like a simple ceremony of giving a diploma, but a recognizable, wholehearted embrace and valuing of the initiates' power to contribute to the community. In other words, this last stage must make the returning men and women want to maintain the pride of their community. This will fuel a continued sense of belonging, which is so much lacking in the heart of the modern youth.<sup>216</sup>

The second response to Grimes is related to the first, but is more specific in that the stated intent of Catholic initiation (just as other initiations) is not for the individual, but for inclusion in the ongoing life of the Catholic Church. As we shall see in the field work, Grimes’ insights are relevant in that many of the Catholic churches of Minneapolis are attempting to incorporate dimensions of an individualized faith journey and self-enhancement

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<sup>215</sup> Paul R. Powers, *Intent In Islamic Law: Motive and Meaning in Sunni Fiqh* (Leiden: The Netherlands, 2006), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=uB0tNdJZYnEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=intent+in+islamic+law&hl=en&ei=gms7TcrwOcn0QGQ5LmwAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=uB0tNdJZYnEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=intent+in+islamic+law&hl=en&ei=gms7TcrwOcn0QGQ5LmwAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 90.

<sup>216</sup> Malidoma Some, “Rights of Passage,” *Utne Reader*, no. 64 (1994): 68. Electronic journal unavailable. Quote taken from <http://www.johnvdavis.com/wild/WRoP%2011-26-03.pdf>.

in the initiation process; however, even so, some form of ongoing community relationship remains part of the expectations. Therefore, Catholic initiation is unlike a “sub-contracted” wilderness initiation where initiates leave the wilderness experience without expectations of further relationship with the wilderness “communitas.”

By contrast, the Catholic churches in Minneapolis appear to be attempting to hold the tension of an individualized approach to initiation into a community. Therefore, though Grimes’ conclusions are interesting, the evolution to include a more individualized approach does not alleviate the current tension in the initiation process in which the initiates are leaving the community.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

This review of key figures in initiation theory in both early and current eras elicits an understanding that initiation most commonly includes incorporation and ongoing community interactions. Initiates are taught the narratives, myths, rituals, beliefs, and values that form the basis of community identity – whether that be the prayers to Nzambi for good health among the Ndembu people, or the empowering of God’s spirit among the early Christians.<sup>217</sup> Such beliefs, values, practices, etc. form the core of the relational hub around which the community interactions revolve and which its survival depends. The initiates coming into the community are expected to participate in that hub in various degrees according to the context. In theory, the initiated individual should become part of a group.

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<sup>217</sup> Victor Turner, *Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=CeXDvs9E7IsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Revelation+and+Divination+in+Ndembu+Ritual&hl=en&ei=zeL2TaaLHsXb0QGrpZiTCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=CeXDvs9E7IsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Revelation+and+Divination+in+Ndembu+Ritual&hl=en&ei=zeL2TaaLHsXb0QGrpZiTCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 74. Turner speaks of the main grandfather god, Nzambi, granter of good crops and good health.

This is the expectation within Catholic initiation as well which initiates one into a worldwide community. The Catholic Church is constituted by the “universal group of Christian communities that is in communion with the Pope, the successor of Peter. (This church) was established by Christ on the foundation of his Apostles.” Therefore, when initiates complete the ritual process they are considered part of the invisible “spiritual community....a society of souls, having the profoundest and most vital relations with the invisible and eternal world; and (are) yet, at the same time (part of) an institution existing in the present world.....”<sup>218</sup>

However, it must be noted that because this community is so large, consisting of 1.1 billion Catholics spread over 250,000 churches worldwide, ongoing participation does not occur in the same way as that which is described by some of the anthropologists of this chapter who developed theories based on smaller, more contained social settings. In the Catholic Church, by contrast, it is theoretically possible that an initiate could leave the parish of their initiation and still be participate in one of the numerous Catholic parishes in their current context. The church does not expect their members to live in the same parish for the rest of their lives; they do expect them to practice rituals common to Catholicism including mass attendance and confession in whatever context in which they live. Such rituals are among those that define who is participating in the community after their initiation and who is not.<sup>219</sup>

However, as we shall see in chapter six, initiates leaving the church immediately following the initiation process are not, on a regular basis, attending church in different cities

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<sup>218</sup> Benjamin Gregory, *The Holy Catholic Church, The Communion of Saints* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1873), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=I5IEAAAAQAAJ&pg=frontcover&dq=The+Holy+Catholic+Church,+The+Communion+of+of+saints+benjamin&hl=en&ei=uOT2TZfVG8X40gHTx\\_yqCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDcQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=I5IEAAAAQAAJ&pg=frontcover&dq=The+Holy+Catholic+Church,+The+Communion+of+of+saints+benjamin&hl=en&ei=uOT2TZfVG8X40gHTx_yqCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDcQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 13.

<sup>219</sup> *Catechism*. Code of Canon Law #1247 states that “On Sundays and other holy days of observation, the faithful are obliged to attend Mass.

nor returning to church at a later age. Where incorporation is spotty after initiation, it is logical that tension forms, for group survival is threatened if each cohort wishes to re-invent their relationship to the group or institution, including opting out of an ongoing link. The expectations of the church as an institution are that individuals will participate in the life of the community by holding the beliefs, keeping the values, sharing the relationships, and performing the rituals. In return, individuals are given a sense of identity and receive the relational linkages and other benefits of the group. This community-individual dialectic forms the common experience of post-initiation incorporation, and if the dialectic becomes unbalanced as it has in the Minneapolis context, tension arises because of the dissonance in expectation vis-à-vis behavior.

This, then, concludes part one of the dissertation in which the background text is outlined with the historical pattern of dissonance in chapter one and the current dissonance explained in this chapter as related to common expectations within initiation rituals as understood by key figures in anthropology. With this historical foundation in place, attention can now be turned to the presentation of the fieldwork in which high rates of attrition are illustrated in two years of fieldwork across a variety of Catholic contexts in the western suburbs of Minneapolis. The fieldwork data is developed over the following four chapters, beginning first with a section addressing key methodological issues in qualitative fieldwork, then moving through two years of the research narrative, and ending with a chapter analyzing the data. At the end of this section, the dissonance in the Minneapolis context related to lack of reincorporation post-initiation should become clear.



## **SECTION TWO**

### ***Initiation Dissonance in the Minneapolis Context***

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Methodological Considerations*

#### I. Introduction

In developing the pattern of dissonance here, the primary form of research inquiry undertaken in this dissertation is not textual but “contextual” in that the subjects are not books or articles of past authors but people within their living context.<sup>220</sup> Despite these differences, however, these two forms of research are commonly combined within the same inquiry as was evident in the previous two chapters that could be considered “textual.” Ethnographers commonly report more than just details from their fieldwork, they also explore cultural and global history, engage in comparative social analysis, and connect their social observations with studies from the past as they connect their specific research with larger social illustrations and patterns. This research inquiry is no different: the first two chapters established a historical pattern of dissonance within Catholic initiation as well as identifying some of the general social dimensions related to the current discrepancy. This textual discussion connects to the contextual dimensions of the fieldwork in this chapter and those that following in which the observation of “disappearing initiates” from this research connects to the larger pattern.

In this dialectical relationship between text and context, it is important to note that, for the ethnographer, the fieldwork evidence retains an *a priori* place in the epistemological claims. “Those who do historical research in conjunction with the fieldwork tend to regard the historical work as adjunct: their archival research is conducted to augment fieldwork, which retains its centrality to the inquiry. Historians and biographers, by contrast, see

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<sup>220</sup> Eileen Gambrill, *Social Work Practice: A Critical Thinker's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=6NcAiVolw0wC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Eileen+Gambrill,+Social+Work+Practice&hl=en&ei=KPj3Td3NEOf50gGc24nQDQ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=6NcAiVolw0wC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Eileen+Gambrill,+Social+Work+Practice&hl=en&ei=KPj3Td3NEOf50gGc24nQDQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 297.

themselves engaged in a creative and satisfying process of discovery complete in its own right.”<sup>221</sup>

This neatly describes the relationship between text and context in this dissertation. The field research is the focal point since it was in the living context that new discoveries were made which then determined the nature of the thesis and the textual work related to the history of Catholic initiation, concepts in initiation, and relevant sociological factors and forces. I could not make these relevant connections until the research process was completed; thus, the fieldwork resulted in the thesis development and the contextual research drove the scope of the textual research presented in the previous chapters.

Now the transition is made from textual to contextual as the process, design, results, and analysis of the fieldwork comprise the next four chapters. Taken in order, the current chapter delineates the methodology of the research and addresses common concerns related to the validity of qualitative fieldwork. The next two chapters then discuss the original intent of the inquiry, describe the two-year process of research, provide specific details of the initiation processes in the churches and present the data of the interviews. The sixth chapter then analyzes the research by answering relevant questions and providing a comparative sample of initiation within Protestant churches in this context. With this outline in mind, attention turns first in this chapter to addressing the common and many methodological issues facing the researchers as they conduct fieldwork with specific application to this dissertation.

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<sup>221</sup> Harry F. Wolcott, *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2008), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=mWFMrDMXZz0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Ethnography.+A+Way+of+Seeing&hl=en&ei=jvj3TfWNNJTqgAerzLmsDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=mWFMrDMXZz0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Ethnography.+A+Way+of+Seeing&hl=en&ei=jvj3TfWNNJTqgAerzLmsDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 64.

## II. Ethnographic Methodology and Issues in Qualitative Inquiry

Broadly defined, ethnography is a qualitative research method in which the field researcher spends extended time in a specific social context and records “as accurately as possible the perspective modes of life of (the) various groups.”<sup>222</sup> Here, the ethnographer seeks to “grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, (and) to realize *his* vision of *his* world” in order that she or he may effectively present observations, provide evidence, and develop theory based on what they have learned.<sup>223</sup> To accomplish this, the researcher “learn(s) through systematic observation in the field.....carefully recording what they see and hear, as well as how things are done, while learning the meanings that people attribute to what they make and do.”<sup>224</sup>

As a qualitative research method, the validity of ethnographic epistemology and theory is commonly subject to criticism when compared to quantitative methods that tend to favor positivistic forms of data collection such as creating hypotheses, eliminating variability, multiple testing, and drawing conclusions based on repeatability and patterns.<sup>225</sup> The critique centers firstly around issues that challenge the methodological validity of ethnographic research, and secondly in terms of the relevance and ‘generalizability’ of ethnographic conclusions for other contexts. As to the former, “most of the criticisms stem from the fact

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<sup>222</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=2xaB9PkH1UC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Structural+Anthropology&hl=en&ei=3Pj3TZOsRgQfE69n6Cw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=2xaB9PkH1UC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Structural+Anthropology&hl=en&ei=3Pj3TZOsRgQfE69n6Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 2.

<sup>223</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (London: Routledge, 1922), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=Q\\_Z5DaKiqjQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Argonauts+of+the+Western+Pacific&hl=en&ei=LPn3TefmDsbiiALZ2aT9DA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Q_Z5DaKiqjQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Argonauts+of+the+Western+Pacific&hl=en&ei=LPn3TefmDsbiiALZ2aT9DA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 25. Italics are in the text.

<sup>224</sup> Margaret Diane Lecompte and Jean J. Schensul, *Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 1999), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=2ntEYuw2A8IC&printsec=frontcover&dq=and+Conducting+Ethnographic+Research&hl=en&ei=Z\\_n3TeyxCMbViALm\\_fD9DA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=2ntEYuw2A8IC&printsec=frontcover&dq=and+Conducting+Ethnographic+Research&hl=en&ei=Z_n3TeyxCMbViALm_fD9DA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 2.

<sup>225</sup> Immy Holloway, *Basic Concepts for Qualitative Research* (Oxford: Blackwell Science, Ltd., 1997), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=yPU0ubJkpXcC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Basic+Concepts+for+Qualitative+Research&hl=en&ei=y\\_n3Ten4B8nYiALM8qj9DA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=yPU0ubJkpXcC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Basic+Concepts+for+Qualitative+Research&hl=en&ei=y_n3Ten4B8nYiALM8qj9DA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 122.

that ethnographies are based in the detailed description and analysis of a particular context or situation” making the data limited and difficult to analyze by outside readers.<sup>226</sup> As to the latter, “critics charge that one case or a few cases cannot be generalized to the larger population.”<sup>227</sup> This second objection is addressed firstly, and briefly, below as it is only tangentially relevant to this dissertation. Questions of epistemological validity are more robust in contrast and thus require a lengthy section that comprises the remaining space for this chapter.

### ***Generalization in Ethnographic Research***

In addressing this critique, it is important to note that the central nature of the thesis is limited to identifying a consistent pattern of dissonance and evolution within Catholic initiation and then connecting this trend with the ethnographic evidence of dissonance from the current context of the western suburbs of Minneapolis. While the dissertation discusses some of the possible “whys” related to the current dissonance, the contributing sociological factors of community, agency and structure may or may not be unique when compared to similar and dissimilar contexts throughout the rest of Minnesota, the United States, and the world. While it is reasonable to suggest incorporation may be inconsistent in initiation rituals in contexts where individualized human agency transcends cultural norms and pressures, this thesis is not attempting a universal claim repeatable with certainty across a variety of contexts. It is simply showing a dissonance between institutional expectation and local expression for a current initiation ritual, connecting that dissonance to a historical pattern, and discussing possible options and outcomes now and in future.

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<sup>226</sup> David Nunan, *Research Methods in Language Learning* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=kUn7y7bgUEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Research+Methods+in+Language+Learning&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=J\\_r3TZGGBKf40gGYxfDKCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=kUn7y7bgUEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Research+Methods+in+Language+Learning&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=J_r3TZGGBKf40gGYxfDKCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 58.

<sup>227</sup> Larry Reynolds and Nancy Herman-Kinney, *Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003), 229.

With this thesis thus contained to the “what” of a localized dissonance and evolution within a historical pattern, the analytical “why” then answers the critique of “generalizability” by contributing one piece to the construction of macro-social theory. While not claiming the “why” to be true of all contexts where high human agency meets community pressures, it does provide a comparative model for future research within both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* contexts, and may help develop and solidify social theories of initiation in contexts that are becoming increasingly globalized, interconnected, individualistic. Research in multiple contexts, as well as follow-up research in this context is still needed, of course, as social research is inherently dynamic.<sup>228</sup> Again, however, even though the fieldwork contributes to the overall knowledge in the field, creating a macro-social theory is not the point here.

### ***Validity in Ethnographic Research***

By comparison, objections of validity are decidedly more relevant for this dissertation, and for ethnography in general. While some ethnologists tend to “ignore such criticisms” related to validity, others “recognize potential threats to the credibility of their findings (and) develop strategies to address the issues.”<sup>229</sup> Ignoring the issues does not seem prudent as questions related to the data gathering process are critical since the reader is primarily dependent on the reports and observations of the researcher. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the ethnographer to demonstrate a methodological strategy for achieving valid data – a demonstration which requires more thorough consideration.

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<sup>228</sup> Harry F. Dahms, *No Social Science Without Critical Theory* (Bingley: Emerald Publishing Group Limited, 2008), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=6xCb9wfgW3oC&pg=frontcover&dq=social+research+is+inherently+dyna mic&hl=en&ei=oPr3TdVHxsvRAeXOqLIL&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEw AA#v=onepage&q=social%20research%20is%20inherently%20dynamic&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=6xCb9wfgW3oC&pg=frontcover&dq=social+research+is+inherently+dyna mic&hl=en&ei=oPr3TdVHxsvRAeXOqLIL&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEw AA#v=onepage&q=social%20research%20is%20inherently%20dynamic&f=false), 21.

<sup>229</sup> Margaret D. LeCompte and Judith Preissle Goetz, “Problems of Reliability and Credibility in Ethnographic Research,” *Review of Educational Research* 52, no. 1 (1982): 32, <http://rer.sagepub.com/content/52/1/31.short>.

Before presenting specific strategies to address questions of validity, however, four qualifications need stating. Firstly, ethnographic descriptions do not capture the full scope of the reality of a social context as “at best they simply represent those aspects of it that are relevant to the purposes motivating the inquiry.”<sup>230</sup> Secondly, multiple valid descriptions of the same phenomena are certainly possible provided the observations do not conflict, but complement each other.<sup>231</sup> Thirdly, “there are no *guarantees* of validity of any kind, and there is an inevitable element of practical decision-making involved in research” as the context, the subject, and the available resources matter in shaping the scope of the inquiry.<sup>232</sup> Finally, within the range of literature discussing validity in qualitative research, different authors tend to emphasize different criteria and most tend to present validity as related to the degree to which a study is valid based on their criteria rather than claiming an either/or proposition. With no “perfectly valid” form of ethnography or set of criteria for achieving it, therefore, the task ahead is to summarize and synthesize some of the more common approaches for addressing the issue of validity.

**Methodological Issue #1:** *Time*

**Strategy:** *Appropriate form of ethnography for the context*

Collecting evidence and data in ethnography can prove difficult due to the inherent uniqueness of any social group. Social contexts are commonly defined by specific written and unwritten codes of conduct, tensions and power struggles, relational networks, fractures and fissures, overt and subtle symbols, and myths and rituals.<sup>233</sup> It can be a long process for the researcher to discover and uncover these often-complex societal dimensions and critically

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<sup>230</sup> Martyn Hammersley, “Some Reflections on Ethnography and Validity,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 5, no. 3 (1992): 199, [http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/917356\\_750430046\\_746930305.pdf](http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/917356_750430046_746930305.pdf).

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Much has been written on interactions among social groups and various authors emphasize some of the named dimensions above as core to understanding the social group. Steven Lukes, for example, writes on power in individual interactions. Catherine Bell, as referenced last chapter, considers some of the key rituals of daily life in a social group.

appraise them; therefore, the length in time spent in a given context is crucial for the validity of observations and theory. Wolcott asks, “Does that make time the critical attribute of fieldwork? According to the ethnographic tradition, the answer is yes.”<sup>234</sup>

That said, like qualitative validity in general, there are no standardized norms for how much time a researcher should spend in a context for their observations and analysis to attain a high degree of validity. In early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century ethnography, three to four years of fieldwork was common among some influential ethnographers. Bronislaw Malinowski spent 1915-1918 in the Trobriand Islands, Mary Douglas studied the Lele people of Congo for a similar length of time before writing, and Clifford Geertz researched for four years in Java in the late 1940s and early 1950s before earning his Ph.D. in 1956. Among these key figures, the complete process of observation and writing often extended up to eight years, and by virtue of their status in the discipline, the validity of their contributions is not often in question.

However, this length of time contrasts with the work of other prominent ethnographers who argued time spent in context rarely needed to extend past two years. Margaret Mead, for example, disputed the Malinowskian notions that the ethnographer must take significant time to learn the native tongue, arguing information can be gleaned by gaining rapport, maintaining good relationships, and learning enough vernacular to obtain data.<sup>235</sup> For these and for practical reasons, “targeted” ethnography became the norm among some researchers since,

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<sup>234</sup> Harry F. Wolcott, *The Art of Fieldwork* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2005), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=qcxanF633RoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+art+of+fieldwork+wolcott&hl=en&ei=1QH4Tcb\\_Deaw0AGEtuiCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=qcxanF633RoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+art+of+fieldwork+wolcott&hl=en&ei=1QH4Tcb_Deaw0AGEtuiCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 69.

<sup>235</sup> James Clifford, “On Ethnographic Authority,” in *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, ed. Antonius C.G.M. Robben and Jeffrey A. Sluka (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), Google Books, <http://books.google.com/books?id=8l6ODHkyA40C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Ethnographic+Fieldwork:+An+>



Culture, seen as a complex whole, was always too much to master in a short research span....the new ethnographer tended to focus thematically on particular institutions. The aim was not to contribute a complete inventory or description of custom but rather to get at the whole through one or more of its parts.....<sup>236</sup>

These shortened, more targeted forms of ethnography are still part of the sociological landscape and remain useful for many forms of field work – including that related to doctoral programs that require completion of research, fieldwork, and writing in five years or less. This is quite important as fieldwork still requires adequate time to make valid observations, yet these academic programs mitigate against the possibility of an eight-year process such as that of Malinowski or Geertz. Thus there is a resulting conundrum in ethnographical work for academic degrees: how does one achieve a reasonable degree of validity in research when the time is compressed?

To alleviate the issue, Jeffrey and Troman suggest three possible “time mode strategies” for achieving valid results when there are time constraints.<sup>237</sup> Firstly, the researcher could choose a *compressed time mode* in which they inhabit the research site “almost permanently” for a few days up to a month, but not longer than this.<sup>238</sup> Secondly, the researcher could opt for a *recurrent time mode* in which they sample the same temporal phases such as the beginning or end of term, festivals, inspections, etc., across a wide variety of social contexts but do not spend lengthy time in any of them.<sup>239</sup> Finally, the researcher could choose a *selective intermittent time mode* in which the research lasts up to two years

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Anthropological+Reader&hl=en&ei=KAL4TaORBanu0gGo1L2lCw&sa=X&oi=book\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false, 481.

<sup>236</sup> James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1998), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=8D1BBHMI7UMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Predicament+of+Culture+.+Twentieth+Century+Ethnography,+Literature,+and+Art&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=0AL4TZuQOcn50gHHq9GZCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=8D1BBHMI7UMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Predicament+of+Culture+.+Twentieth+Century+Ethnography,+Literature,+and+Art&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=0AL4TZuQOcn50gHHq9GZCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 31.

<sup>237</sup> Bob Jeffrey and Geoff Troman, “Time for Ethnography.” *British Educational Research Journal* 30, no. 4 (2004): 538, [http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/281322\\_731408866\\_713613818.pdf](http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/281322_731408866_713613818.pdf). Their methodological suggestions are being increasingly referenced in recent ethnographic work – particularly in modern cultures.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 542.

but “with a very flexible approach to the frequency of site visits.”<sup>240</sup> Of these three suggestions, the “selective intermittent time mode” was the most appropriate method for this dissertation and therefore more detail of this is provided below.

Unlike the fieldwork of Malinowski, Turner, and Mead, selective, intermittent fieldwork does not broadly describe an entire culture, and there is less living in and “hanging around” to develop relationships with a wide variety of the population. Specific contexts and relationships “are selected for examination and interpretation” but often the amount of time spent in these contexts and conversations varies according to accessibility, purpose, and the degree to which the researcher feels the setting is appropriate for the overall study. Within this framework, there may be short periods of time featuring significant relational contact followed by long periods in which little contact is made. Much is dependent upon the continual reflection and interpretation of the data gathered -- allowing for a fluidity of research design as themes develop. In this flexible design the researcher “pursue(s) significant leads and ideas as they emerge, especially in the early stages of research.”<sup>241</sup>

The researcher then analyzes what they have learned and distills the data into central patterns and ideas as specific social phenomena become progressively more consistent.<sup>242</sup> Thus, “the main features of this mode (selective intermittent) are the flexibility to follow a particular empirical or analytical path, to be able to focus more and more closely on any relevant aspect of a site.....”<sup>243</sup> As the focus sharpens, the researcher selectively chooses which relationships and contexts will be most helpful to both confirm and negate the gathered evidence and excludes other dimensions considered irrelevant.

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 540.

<sup>241</sup> Elizabeth Murphy and Robert Dingwall, *Qualitative Methods and Health Policy Research* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, Inc., 2003), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=g8sJ4mLg5h8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Qualitative+Methods+and+Health+Policy+Research+\(&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=ixj4TZqbKcj50gGO8ImbCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&esnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=g8sJ4mLg5h8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Qualitative+Methods+and+Health+Policy+Research+(&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=ixj4TZqbKcj50gGO8ImbCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&esnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 241.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

Thus, selected intermittent ethnography is not “thick” in the same way as early forms of fieldwork where ethnographers spend many years or even decades working to convey a broad cultural spectrum of myths, rituals, norms, history, behaviors, deviance, values, and language. Shortened ethnographic modes, by contrast, do not attempt to describe or explain broad cultural phenomena on their own. Rather, such modes commonly focus on a single set of behaviors or observations and describe these “thickly.” These thorough descriptions of specific phenomenon are then compared to and joined with other descriptions to help develop macro-social theories. Thus, the time criteria for validity in selective intermittent modes differs from that of ethnography that offers “thick” descriptions of an entire culture. Six months to two years are commonly spent to demonstrate the homing in on a single issue or behavior in a specific context.<sup>244</sup>

### ***Application to Dissertation***

As the research process and context unfolds in this chapter and the next, and with this definition of selective-intermittent ethnography in mind, it becomes more apparent why it formed the basis for an appropriate methodology. A *Gesellschaft* context in which individuals live in disconnected relational networks makes broad, thick descriptions of a singular context extremely difficult since even a single church does not function like that of the smaller, *Gemeinschaft* settings of the Trobriand Islands or a specific Nuer community. In addition, the churches in the study often comprise several thousand parishioners and the surrounding parish may encompass over 20,000 possible constituents making the kind of ethnography conducted by Malinowski and Douglas impossible. Finally, because church priests, confirmation directors, and staff in Minneapolis are often extremely busy, and because parishioners only visit the church for a few selected hours each month and are mostly unavailable during the week, intermittent visits as their schedules allowed was the most

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

effective means of gathering evidence. “Hanging around” the context would have been intrusive and have accomplished little.

As a result, longer ethnographic strategies were not a viable option. Broad conversations, observations, and experiences early in the fieldwork helped me learn of the different social realities and structures in order to develop a more specific line of inquiry. As the fieldwork progressed, I focused increasingly on the fact I could locate only a small number of past initiates; thus, in year two, I interviewed confirmation directors from around the city to describe and confirm initiate disappearance from the church. As described in the next chapter, this was in not the original design of the study but emerged as general observations coalesced into specific patterns. According to the parameters of selected-intermittent research as a mode of legitimate ethnographic work, this would be the appropriate process and two years a standard length of time for achieving a high degree of validity as related to time spent in the context.

**Methodological Issue #2:** *Negotiating Insider/Outsider Status*  
**Strategy:** *Synthesizing “Etic” and “Emic” Perspectives*

The second methodological issue relates to the “insider/outsider” dilemma common within sociology and anthropology. The central debate discusses the researcher’s status vis-à-vis the context, and how insider and outsider dimensions affect their attempt to describe, analyze, and compare the people they are studying.<sup>245</sup> It is a significant issue because the researcher’s task is to depict the complex sociological characteristics and relationships of a given context, yet it is difficult to verify whether such descriptions match the experience of the cultural insider who lives and “breathes” their context. The insider and the outsider may

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<sup>245</sup> Margaret Anderson and Howard Taylor, *Sociology: Understanding a Diverse Society* (Belmont: Thompson and Wadsworth, 2006), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=UILcQZS6Bi4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Sociology:+Understanding+a+Diverse+Society&hl=en&ei=6Rj4TZXhKpSn0AGasoieCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=UILcQZS6Bi4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Sociology:+Understanding+a+Diverse+Society&hl=en&ei=6Rj4TZXhKpSn0AGasoieCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 45.

participate in the same cultural events, relationships, practices, and rituals, yet experience them quite differently – the tension of which is described below:

In ascertaining and placing this thing so easily called ‘the culture,’ therefore, and the researcher’s access to it, one has to ask, ‘Which version? For whom? When?’ For the outsider, it is all one: rural Kadazan Christian, or German Lutherans in Hope. But from the inside.....the fissures and fractures are as sharp as the rejection, retention and negotiation of the old ways, or the new, is clear.<sup>246</sup>

In addressing this insider/outsider debate, scholars may employ the terms “emic” and “etic” to describe and differentiate the perspective of the researcher, the subjects, and the context. The words themselves derive from the terms “phonetic” and “phonemic” often used by researchers in the study of linguistics – a brief description of which is helpful for understanding emic and etic in sociology. To study phonetics in linguistics is to analyze the scope of humanly possible vocal sounds of which all global languages consist.<sup>247</sup> Scholars estimate there are 5,000-8,000 world languages, but only a range of approximately 800 possible vocalizations from which humans create their words of communication.<sup>248</sup> Linguistic researchers in phonetics study a variety of languages to determine common patterns and structures in a macro-sense. To study phonemics, by contrast, is to consider a singular language and the complex sounds of which its words consist – similar to noting the various notes on a piano that make up an entire composition. Instead of determining broad patterns, those who study phonemics analyze the nuances and vocal patterns of a given

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<sup>246</sup> Elizabeth Koepping, *Food, Friends, and Family: On Lived Religion* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=rl8HavhsugsC&pg=frontcover&dq=Food,+Friends,+and+Family:+On+Lived+Religion&hl=en&ei=UBn4TaD7EJOn0AHez5W\\_Cw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Food%2C%20Friends%2C%20and%20Family%3A%20On%20Lived%20Religion&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=rl8HavhsugsC&pg=frontcover&dq=Food,+Friends,+and+Family:+On+Lived+Religion&hl=en&ei=UBn4TaD7EJOn0AHez5W_Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Food%2C%20Friends%2C%20and%20Family%3A%20On%20Lived%20Religion&f=false), 9.

<sup>247</sup> Michael Ashby and John Maidment, *Introducing Phonetic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=JxjTLu9sIDUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=introducing+phonetic+science&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=w537TYr7KKv0AGsuGbAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=JxjTLu9sIDUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=introducing+phonetic+science&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=w537TYr7KKv0AGsuGbAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), x.

<sup>248</sup> Melissa E. Epstein, “All the Sounds of the World’s Languages,” [http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/linguistics/people/grads/melissa/all\\_the\\_sounds.PDF](http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/linguistics/people/grads/melissa/all_the_sounds.PDF).

language, how the tongue is used by native speakers, and the scope of differentiated sounds in a given linguistic system. Thus it can be said that phonetics focuses on the “outside” of broad and global patterns, while phonemics is a look from “inside” a specific language.

When applied to sociological research, Kenneth Pike originally derived “etic” and “emic” from the suffixes phonetics and phonemics, and applied them to describe the status of the researcher as one who is “insider” and/or “outsider.”<sup>249</sup> To the user or “insider” of the language, the phonemic structure of words and how to say them is likely self-evident as they “know how to shape their mouths and tongues differently to vary the sounds they produce.”<sup>250</sup> Phonetic scholars studying as an “outsider” to the social group may not be able to produce the same sounds as those they are observing, but they can study the spoken phenomena on a general basis in order to develop a comparative sample with other languages outside the system under research.<sup>251</sup> Thus, Pike took the suffixes of emic and etic and expanded them beyond linguistic analysis and into sociological research to describe the status of the researcher vis-à-vis her or his subjects. He writes, “the etic viewpoint studies behavior as from outside of a particular system, (and) the emic viewpoint results from studying behavior as from inside the system....emic is to the inside as etic is to the outside.”<sup>252</sup>

When applied to field research, then, emic and etic relate to the validity of the work by asking how a researcher’s description of a culture can be deemed legitimate. Those who emphasize the necessity of the emic perspective argue any description of a culture must be accepted by the social “insider” in order for it to be considered valid, making the insider the final authority for what is depicted or said about their social experience. The outsider cannot understand the inner psyche of the insider in social relationships and may, even unwittingly

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<sup>249</sup> Russell T. McCutcheon, “The Study of Religion as a Cross-Disciplinary Exercise,” University of Alabama, <http://religion.ua.edu/theoreticalbackground.html>.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 17.

make a priori assumptions related to how social systems work, the motivations behind observed behaviors, and the relational interworking among people and institutions.<sup>253</sup>

Therefore, they risk misinterpreting data and fail to realize the average actor often acts out of intensely personal motivations and not always according to norms of a macro-systemic grid.

Malinowski writes:

Not even the most intelligent native has any clear idea of the Kula (gift-exchange cycle) as a big, organized social constructions, still less of its sociological function and implications. If you asked him what the Kula is, he would answer by giving a few details, most likely giving his personal experience and subjective view...For the integral picture does not exist in his mind; he is in it, and cannot see the whole from the outside.<sup>254</sup>

By contrast, those who emphasize the importance of the etic perspective argue the insider cannot be the primary authority because of their limited perspective.<sup>255</sup> Therefore, the outsider researcher is well within epistemological legitimacy to comment on the motivations and sociological factors giving rise to certain behaviors. A careful researcher may have information from inside the culture, based on interviews and observations, of which the singular informant may be unaware, thus limiting their perspective and experience. The researcher may also have a broader scope of data and experience from other cultures in which “natives” exhibit similar behaviors and language from which they can draw as they interpret the culture and create theory.

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<sup>253</sup> David M. Fetterman, “Ethnography,” in *The Sage Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*, ed. Leonard Bickman and Debra Rog (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2009), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=9\\_bUtEpbGUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Sage+Handbook+of+Applied+Social+Research+Method,&hl=en&ei=Jhv4TaOACqbW0gGA0Ly9Cw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=The%20Sage%20Handbook%20of%20Applied%20Social%20Research%20Method%2C&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=9_bUtEpbGUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Sage+Handbook+of+Applied+Social+Research+Method,&hl=en&ei=Jhv4TaOACqbW0gGA0Ly9Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=The%20Sage%20Handbook%20of%20Applied%20Social%20Research%20Method%2C&f=false), 547.

<sup>254</sup> Malinowski, *Argonauts*, 83.

<sup>255</sup> Bilal Sambur, “From the Dichotomy of Spiritualism/Realism to the Dichotomy of Insider/Outsider,” in *Theorizing Faith: The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Ritual*, ed. Elisabeth Arweck and Martin D. Springer (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2002), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=5kRRZ6sQOdkC&pg=frontcover&dq=insider+cannot+be+authority+because+of+limited+perspective&hl=en&ei=QR34TcycCqTy0gGPxeTVCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=2&sqi=2&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=insider%20cannot%20be%20authority%20because%20of%20limited%20perspective&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=5kRRZ6sQOdkC&pg=frontcover&dq=insider+cannot+be+authority+because+of+limited+perspective&hl=en&ei=QR34TcycCqTy0gGPxeTVCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&sqi=2&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=insider%20cannot%20be%20authority%20because%20of%20limited%20perspective&f=false), 28.

In further support of the etic perspective, some sociologists suggest the outsider is, to a certain degree, able to grasp the point of view of the insider. Max Weber argued sociologists could understand the experience of the insider through *verstehen*, a form of comprehension achievable when researchers imagine themselves in the place of their subject.<sup>256</sup> Here, through dialogue, questions for clarification, meaningful engagement with the unfamiliar, and focusing on the “otherness” of human experience, the researcher empathetically imagines themselves in the place of the subject to, from this basis, develop an analytical theory.<sup>257</sup> *Verstehen* has become a common conceptual approach in conjunction with phenomenological methodology standing in contrast to more traditional positivistic methods.<sup>258</sup>

Such arguments form the crux of the insider/outsider debate, leaving us with the central question: should the researcher be limited to eidetic assertions about that which they observe, or can they emphasize trends and theories that transcend specific social groups?<sup>259</sup> Different approaches within anthropological philosophy have tended to favor one side or the other, particularly in the 1960s when Pike first brought the issue to prominence. However, a broad argument as to the merits of either side is beyond the scope of this research. Bowing to current precedent, I see the answer lying somewhere in between.<sup>260</sup> In other words, field

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<sup>256</sup> Anderson and Taylor, *Sociology*, 46.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Thomas Lindlof and Bryan Taylor, *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=OpGRnkSCGgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Qualitative+Communication+Research+Methods&hl=en&ei=wRv4TcS3HsP10gHv4bS5Cw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=OpGRnkSCGgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Qualitative+Communication+Research+Methods&hl=en&ei=wRv4TcS3HsP10gHv4bS5Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 32.

<sup>259</sup> Mary Rogers, *Sociology, Ethnomethodology, and Experience. A Phenomenological Critique* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=LzA4AAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Sociology,+Ethnomethodology,+and+Experience&hl=en&src=bnrr&ei=Bxz4TYCnDIXn0QHLv827Cw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=LzA4AAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Sociology,+Ethnomethodology,+and+Experience&hl=en&src=bnrr&ei=Bxz4TYCnDIXn0QHLv827Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 77.

<sup>260</sup> Alessandro Duranti, *Linguistic Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=ptk9xUamLeUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Linguistic+Anthropology&hl=en&src=bnrr&ei=vR74TYKqCKPr0gGPndi5Cw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=ptk9xUamLeUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Linguistic+Anthropology&hl=en&src=bnrr&ei=vR74TYKqCKPr0gGPndi5Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 173.



workers commonly negotiate the issue by avoiding the “either/or” approach, instead treating “emic and etic orientations as markers along a continuum of styles or different levels of analysis.”<sup>261</sup> They consider both the native’s point of view insofar as they understand it, and then develop their own analysis while appealing to meta-categories of social structure and group behavior.<sup>262</sup>

Clifford Geertz describes this dialectical tension by connecting the “experience-near” realities for the insider with the “experience-distant” concepts of social life in general.<sup>263</sup> Every person lives in a social context that shapes their unique perspective and to which they are experientially “near.” However, sociality is not inherently relativistic; general, functional patterns among human interactions can be observed. Geertz argues that though the outsider cannot achieve the “nearness” of insider status, they can grasp the native point of view to enough of a degree to “figure out what the devil they think they are up to” and compare that data with “distant” social settings.<sup>264</sup> Thus, the researcher moves between emic and etic considerations to achieve legitimate validity as, “good ethnography requires both emic and etic perspectives.”<sup>265</sup>

### ***Application to Dissertation***

This synthetic negotiation of both perspectives forms the methodological tact of this dissertation as well. The overall process *describes the emic experience of those involved in Catholic initiation in Minneapolis from the perspective of an etic observer who shares some dimensions of the emic reality with the participants.* This is a bit of a methodological mouthful and thus requires further elaboration.

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<sup>261</sup> Fetterman, “Ethnography,” 548.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Clifford Geertz, “From the Native’s Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding,” *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 28, no. 1 (1974): 29, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/3822971>.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Fetterman, “Ethnography,” 548.

Most importantly, as stated earlier, the central purpose of the dissertation is to describe an emic experience of dissonance and evolution in Catholic initiation in the Minneapolis context while making connections to a historical pattern. Supporting this claim requires documenting the emic reports of the informants without necessarily entering into an experientially-near experience or constructing an experientially-distant sociological theory. In other words, I am not attempting to emically empathize with the participants, nor etically develop a comparative theory. I am simply taking a common notion of discrepancy between institution and agent, applying it to Catholic and other Christian initiation, and grounding this in past history and current ethnography.

With this as the central claim, there are additional etic and emic considerations which are tangentially relevant. In regards to the etic dimensions, as stated earlier, they help contribute to overall social theory. Outlining experientially-distant sociological concepts such as community, agency, structure and relational networks give further detail and context for the emic reports of informants, and present a way of understanding possible external social factors related to the disappearing initiates. This helps understand how Augustinian theology shaped infant baptism and equally how empowered agency affects the initiation process in Minneapolis. In addition, the etic perspective contributes by providing an added dimension of external credibility to the fieldwork reports. Because the reader is dependent upon the capability and integrity of the researcher, a discussion of larger and well-documented sociological factors further grounds the central claim that initiates are, indeed disappearing.

The additional emic dimensions, by contrast, are “experientially near” and more personal in that they relate to the fact I share some of the initiates’ experience. Having grown up in the same wealthy Minneapolis context while attending a Catholic elementary school provide me with a more “insider” kind of status. This is a quite relevant consideration and is thus addressed in greater detail in the ensuing section on bias and reflexivity. What is

important to note at the end of this section is the fact that addressing etic and emic considerations throughout the dissertation demonstrates how the overall methodology attempts to accommodate both sides of the insider/outsider debate. Attention now shifts, therefore, to the third issue in methodology, that of researcher bias.

**Methodological Issue #3:**     *Research Bias*

**Strategies:**                     *Disconfirming Evidence and Reflexivity*

No researcher comes to the field *tabula rasa* as a blank observational slate; thus a third important methodological issue in this research, as in any fieldwork, pertains to researcher bias, possible emic perspectives, and how presuppositions and assumptions affects the research design and process. Beginning field researchers, perhaps more familiar with positivistic claims of neutrality within quantitative research, may wonder whether meaningful knowledge can be constructed in a way that provides room for bias and subjective ways of looking at the world.<sup>266</sup> Leaving aside the discussion as to whether quantitative research is itself free from bias, the important point is that bias in qualitative research is not perceived to negatively impact the credibility of the research in the same manner as in quantitative research. Therefore, it's "not about whether it exists (in qualitative research) but rather about whether researchers are aware of their biases...."<sup>267</sup>

So the question becomes, how does a researcher account for bias in a way that limits its effect on the validity of the research? The most basic step is honest self-awareness and pursuit of the truth as it exists and not as one presupposes it to be.<sup>268</sup> This intellectual

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<sup>266</sup> Beloo Mehra, "Bias in Qualitative Research: Voice from an Online Classroom," *The Qualitative Report* 7, no. 1 (2002), <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR7-1/mehra.html>. Article not paginated.

<sup>267</sup> Goutham M. Menon and Charles D. Cowger, "Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods," in *The Handbook of Social Research Methods*, ed. Bruce Thyer (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2010), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=IKJnTcV58GQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Handbook+of+Social+Research+Methods&hl=en&ei=9db4TZVD6X50gHzm712&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0C CoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=IKJnTcV58GQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Handbook+of+Social+Research+Methods&hl=en&ei=9db4TZVD6X50gHzm712&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0C CoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 612.

<sup>268</sup> Sandra B. Lewenson, "Historical Research in Practice, Education, and Administration," in *Qualitative Research in Nursing; Advancing the Humanist Imperative*, ed. Helen J. Streubert Speziale and Rinaldi Carpenter

honestly can be demonstrated in two primary ways: firstly, through the search for *disconfirming evidence* in which the informants' experience contrasts or contradicts the alleged sociological trend, and secondly through *reflexivity*, or the critical self-reflection by the researcher on his or her potential biases, emic perspectives, and predispositions as these may affect the research process and conclusions.<sup>269</sup> Each of these strategies is critical for the development for minimizing bias and enhancing validity in the fieldwork and are thus addressed in more detail below in general terms before making specific application to the fieldwork.

### *Disconfirming Evidence*

Finding evidence that contrasts one's claim is important for avoiding "three archetypical *sources of bias* in qualitative research: the **holistic fallacy**: interpreting events as more patterned and congruent than they really are; **elite bias**: over-weighting data from articulate, well-informed, usually high-status informants; **going native**: losing one's perspectives and being co-opted into the perceptions and explanations of local informants."<sup>270</sup> To minimize these potential sources of bias, the researcher should seek input from a variety of insider sources as "documenting multiple perspectives of reality in a given study is crucial to an understanding of why people think and act in the different ways they do."<sup>271</sup> Even if the behaviors, views and perceptions of a given population are quite homogenous, efforts to

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(Philadelphia: Lippincott, Williams, and Wilkins, 2007), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=xNByh3B1Wt0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=qualitative+Research+in+Nursing+Advancing+the+Humanist+Imperative&hl=en&ei=Mtj4Ta2MJ8jOgAeK0d2TDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=xNByh3B1Wt0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=qualitative+Research+in+Nursing+Advancing+the+Humanist+Imperative&hl=en&ei=Mtj4Ta2MJ8jOgAeK0d2TDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 267.

<sup>269</sup> R. Burke Johnson, "Examining the Validity Structure of Qualitative Research," *Education* 118, no.2 (1997): 283, <http://dralessandro.com/subpages/PDFfiles/Validity%20Structure.pdf>.

<sup>270</sup> Lucienne Blessing and Amaresh Chakrabarti, *DRM: A Design Research Methodology* (London: Springer-Verlag, 2009), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=KdR4OmWtQdIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=DRM:+A+Design+Research+Methodology&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=Mdr4Tb2KOcydgQe9we33Cw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=KdR4OmWtQdIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=DRM:+A+Design+Research+Methodology&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=Mdr4Tb2KOcydgQe9we33Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 123.

<sup>271</sup> Fetterman, "Ethnography," 548.

discover different interpretations are critical as social systems invariably have contested readings.

### *Reflexivity*

The second strategy, reflexivity, also represents an important tact for minimizing the effects of researcher bias. The connection of the ethnographer with his or her research context is often much closer than that of the quantitative scientist as the ethnographer's subjects are self-conscious beings.<sup>272</sup> This reality makes the dialectical impact of researcher-on-context and context-on-researcher difficult to anticipate since social exchanges among human subjects are subject to high degrees of variability depending on a wide range of factors. "The relationship between the researcher and researched is typically more intimate, long-term, and multi-stranded, and the complexities introduced by the self-consciousness of the objects or research have even greater scope."<sup>273</sup>

Therefore, in order to cope effectively with the complex and variable nature of relational research, the ethnographer needs to consistently consider and reflect upon how they impact the research context and how the context impacts them. Standard questions for the researcher may include: What do I know? How do I know what I know? What shapes and has shaped my perspective? With what voice do I share my perspective? What do I do with what I have found?<sup>274</sup> Answering these questions requires ongoing critical reflection during the research process as researchers consider how their background affects the formulation of the questions and interviews, as well as how interactions within the field shape their emotional

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<sup>272</sup> Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide To Researching Selves and Others* (London: Routledge, 1999), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=SriOQLwrSeMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Reflexive+Ethnography:+A+Guide+To+Researching+Selves+and+Others+\(&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=ctr4Tci1H8rcgQeKtpD\\_Cw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=SriOQLwrSeMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Reflexive+Ethnography:+A+Guide+To+Researching+Selves+and+Others+(&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=ctr4Tci1H8rcgQeKtpD_Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 3.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=FjBw2oi8El4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Qualitative+Research+and+Evaluation+Methods&hl=en&ei=tdr4TYH1BYLEgAfKj-2RDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=FjBw2oi8El4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Qualitative+Research+and+Evaluation+Methods&hl=en&ei=tdr4TYH1BYLEgAfKj-2RDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 66.

world and the elicited response. For example, researchers may gravitate to more seemingly favorable relationships while avoiding those that cause tension, skewing the outcome. It is vital that researchers acknowledge their own bias, the reality of power in relationship, and the “inevitable process of (re)contextualization when presenting others’ stories.”<sup>275</sup>

### ***Application to Dissertation***

#### *Disconfirming Evidence*

The search for disconfirming evidence is evident throughout the description of the fieldwork. As an example to illustrate its importance here, the discovery of disappearing confirmands was not part of the initial scope of the research inquiry, but instead resulted from finding disconfirming evidence over the first year. The original design of my proposal featured interviewing approximately forty confirmands who had completed the initiation process within the previous five-to-ten years. My goal was to determine if and how values learned in their initiation process affected their daily decisions as they interacted in the workplace, at university life, and among friends and family. In other words, I wanted to find out how initiates assimilated the values of one setting (Catholic initiation) as they negotiated a *Gesellschaft* context of competing values. Did they hold true to their Catholic values while navigating disconnected institutional and social settings with different sets of values?

As we shall see next chapter, I learned in the first year of research among three different Catholic parishes that the churches rarely knew where their past confirmands were. I had wrongly assumed they would know, particularly given that mass attendance and active involvement are core precepts and expectations. However, I rarely found past initiates in any

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<sup>275</sup> Sophie Bond and Michelle Thompson-Fawcett, “Multiplicities, Interwoven Threads, Holistic Paths: The Phronetic Long Haul Approach,” in *Qualitative Urban Analysis. An International Perspective*, ed. Paul Maginn and others (Oxford: Elsevier, Ltd., 2008), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=jCRkrpk1bd4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Qualitative+Urban+Analysis.+An+International+Perspective,&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=Htv4TY\\_nJofQgAfP08yCDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=jCRkrpk1bd4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Qualitative+Urban+Analysis.+An+International+Perspective,&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=Htv4TY_nJofQgAfP08yCDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 61.

of the three parishes. As the first year ended, little of the original research design remained, for few initiates still participated in their church.

This new evidence created a significant dilemma in that I had allotted just one year for the fieldwork before completing the writing process. I could either try to make the most out of the limited observations I had, or pursue the same of enquiry for another year. I chose to change the research inquiry, delete a completed first chapter on values formation, and start over from scratch after two years of writing and fieldwork to accommodate and take further the new evidence. More will be said on this in the ensuing chapter; at this point, it is enough to illustrate the importance of disconfirming evidence for qualitative validity as well as how it can be incorporated into the fieldwork design.

### ***Application to Dissertation***

#### *Reflexivity*

Besides disconfirming evidence, demonstrating critical reflection on the dialectical impact between research and context is helpful in accounting for bias, and there are several relevant areas related to my interactions with the fieldwork setting. Some of the more prominent ways in which this occurred are described below – particularly focusing on the nature of my own religious background, my familiarity with the context, and perceptions of me as an expert in the field.

#### *Catholic and Protestant Background*

I was aware entering the fieldwork that developing relationships and gathering data in the Catholic context may prove challenging given my background in which I attended a Catholic elementary school through the age of twelve even though my parents switched to a Protestant church when I was five years old. I also was teaching in a Baptist university and had been a minister in non-denominational and Evangelical Free churches. Despite overtures and promises of ecumenical dialogue between Catholic and Protestant versions of

Christianity, there was bound to be an air of suspicion related to my request for partnership in fieldwork.<sup>276</sup> My background may have been a factor in why each of the three churches invited me to conduct research before revealing, after several months, they did not have the initiates to interview. Perhaps they did not want to make the Catholic Church “look bad.”

With this in mind, it was critical for me to develop a strategy in which I could gain access to the emic perspective and experience as an etic observer – and a possible untrustworthy one in their eyes. The strategy I developed also needed to truly represent me as a person to uphold an ethic of authenticity and yet still create sympathy in perspective in them. As I introduced myself to the confirmation directors, I typically mentioned my parents switched faith patterns when I was a child, but in recent years my wife and I had considered returning to the Catholic Church because we loved the symbolism, the connections to other parishes, the longer faith tradition, and because we believed there was inherent mystery in communion. All of this was true as part of my journey, and seemed to lead to greater trust as evidenced in the kind of information confirmation directors shared with me over time.

In the reflexive analysis of this strategy, I find I do have authentic sympathy for the Catholic tradition (and the Protestant patterns) and do not have an “axe to grind” with either. Given my background as a “spiritual mutt” and current lack of identification with a given faith pattern (accepting the label of “Christian”), I tend to be comfortable analyzing things as they are and not as I believe they should be. This is not a perfect process, of course, but

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<sup>276</sup> Cody Unterseher, “Mary in Contemporary Protestant Theological Discourse,” in *American Magnificat: Protestants on Mary of Guadalupe*, ed. Maxwell Johnson (Collegeville: Order of St. Benedict, 2010), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=jZ44PmzfkxAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=American+Magnificat:+Protestants+on+Mary+of+Guadalupe&hl=en&ei=Yd\\_4TbWJN6Lq0gGX3riwCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=jZ44PmzfkxAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=American+Magnificat:+Protestants+on+Mary+of+Guadalupe&hl=en&ei=Yd_4TbWJN6Lq0gGX3riwCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 30. Unterseher writes of the one of the more recent debates causing suspicion between the two sides related to Marian theology and her veneration as the “Mother of the Church.” His article, and the book as a whole, explores the theological divide that still exists between the two churches: any organizer of initiation would likely be aware of these debates.



evidence spiritual diversity include the fact I currently teach in a Baptist institution, consult among Evangelical Free people, research in Catholic parishes, teach in a variety of churches, and attend a home church with two other families in which the focus is the Eucharist.

Thus, I do not desire to be a gatekeeper of a particular tradition, but enjoy both Catholic and Protestant traditions while also disagreeing with theological assertions from both. I made clear that the essence of the dissertation is not to suggest Catholic initiation should or will change, for dissonance is simply that perfectly common factor evident in the interplay between institutional prescriptions and local expression. I think the confirmation directors could sense the truth in this, and the self-reflection and awareness demonstrates a reflexivity that adds credibility and validity to the conclusion that initiates are disappearing as reported by them. I am only reporting what I have observed while then making connections with a history of initiation dissonance within this initiation tradition.

### *Familiarity with Context*

A second example relates to the fact I grew up in the wealthy context of the Minneapolis suburbs in which I did my research. Conducting research in one's own setting is referred to as endogenous ethnography,<sup>277</sup> and "may present special problems" for the researcher.<sup>278</sup> While the "relative advantages and disadvantages" are real, they should not be overestimated or taken in an "absolute way."<sup>279</sup> In matters of linguistic competence, for example, speaking the native language is helpful in that it facilitates communication and saves time, but referent concepts could still be wrongly assumed to be the same between

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<sup>277</sup> Rob Van Ginkel, "The Repatriation of Anthropology. Some Observations of End-Ethnography," *Anthropology and Medicine* 5, no. 3 (1998): 251, <http://home.medewerker.uva.nl/r.j.vanginkel/bestanden/repatriation.pdf>.

<sup>278</sup> William Haviland and others, *Cultural Anthropology: The Human Challenge* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2008), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=jxzZl460258C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Cultural+Anthropology:+The+Human+Challenge&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=3OD4TZpZ06rQAeHvwLgL&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=jxzZl460258C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Cultural+Anthropology:+The+Human+Challenge&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=3OD4TZpZ06rQAeHvwLgL&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 61.

<sup>279</sup> Van Ginkel, "Repatriation," 255.

researcher and informant. However, this is not too high of a barrier as the inability to speak the language as a non-native may even exacerbate the possibility of concept confusion. In another example, there may be less tolerance given to the researcher who deviates from social mores in their own context since they “should have known better.” The non-native may also have this problem but provided the mistake is accidental and the reputation good, more leeway is usually given. Finally, an endo-ethnographer risks could becoming “enmeshed” to such a degree that the role of detached observer is compromised.<sup>280</sup> However, this could also be true of the non-native ethnographer who is so embraced by those in their setting that they unknowingly skew data towards favorable impressions. The point is that there are risks and advantages in both traditional ethnography and endo-ethnography. Michael Moffitt writes:

Studying subjects relatively ‘like themselves,’ local ethnographers may be more attuned to cultural nuance than far-from-home anthropologists, better able to draw on experiential understanding. They can often ‘blend in’ more completely....possibly making for better rapport, possibly affecting who and what they are studying less by their presence.<sup>281</sup>

This again, does not mean that ethnography in one’s indigenous setting is more or less valid than other forms of fieldwork, only that there is a process of reflexivity uniquely suited for such a task. In the case of the current research, the most relevant consideration relates to the possibility of “layering” my past experience onto the fieldwork, and how my emic perspective affected the criteria by which I sorted and distilled the information. My adolescent years were characterized by high human agency in which relationships with people and institutions regularly began and ended based on personal choice. I attended a Catholic school, went to three different Protestant churches between the ages of six and nineteen, quit a church youth group when I was struggling with relationships, left the high

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>281</sup> Michael Moffitt, “Ethnographic Writing About American Culture,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21 (1992): 206, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.bethel.edu/stable/2155986>.

school basketball team to ostensibly focus on playing baseball, changed sets of friends several times over six years, had my own car and job, and travelled all over the United States.

Therefore, though I was surprised the church did not know where their confirmands were, I was not surprised to find initiates in this context were involved in a great many activities outside of the church based on personal interest. The only thing that changed was the increase of the pressures of school, work, athletics, and CV development. When adolescents are trying to get into the best universities and gain future opportunities, the church commonly does not have much to offer. These pressures I understood well, and I was able to relate from my own experience growing up in these very same contexts. Yet this is where the potential problem lies: my personal experience may have created a bias that caused me to subjectively and inaccurately “see” only a pattern of high initiate agency and opportunity in the context. It is possible I ignored disconfirming evidence or alternative theories as I subconsciously gave more attention to details that verified my own experience.

However, in sifting through the taped interviews and verbatim transcriptions, the reports of the confirmation directors verified my experience as being quite normative for their own confirmands. Director after director explained how busy their youth are, and how they compete against athletics, schoolwork, jobs, and social media for their attention. While they could have simply emphasized this because they knew my background, I tend to trust their reports as credible because the emic experience on which I could draw seemed to make them feel more comfortable describing their struggles. The fact that each of the thirteen confirmation directors in both Protestant and Catholic churches articulated this issue, as did the head of the largest local Catholic school and a bishop in the Archdiocese office indicates that, unless there was a psychic unity among them to please me, many current confirmands share my past experience of high human agency. It does not seem that I have only “subjectively” seen a pattern: it does indeed exist.

### *Perceptions of Researcher as “Expert”*

As we talked about their perceptions of initiation in their context, several confirmation directors mentioned they hoped my work would help develop a “better” program for them. The combination of my perceived “insider” status and empathy seemed to gain their trust as informants, but asking for collaboration in prescribing a course of action presented another issue for fieldwork. Their request seemed to reflect their perception of me as “researcher-as-expert” – a significant issue in that this perception creates a power differential that can shape the information derived from the field and subsequently bias the research. Thus, this issue had to be considered during the interviews and observations.

Generally speaking, the nature of the relationship between researcher and informant is critical to understand as, “Gatekeepers, sponsors, and the like (indeed, most of the people who act as hosts to the research) will operate in terms of their expectations about the ethnographer’s identity and intentions.”<sup>282</sup> Hosts and informants may have “highly inaccurate” expectations of the research enterprise regarding what it is able to accomplish and their place in it.<sup>283</sup> Commonly, informants and gatekeepers see the researcher as an expert who is well informed as to the perceived problems of their community and is therefore able to sort out possible solutions.<sup>284</sup>

This expectation of the researcher can lead to favorable methodological considerations in data collecting such as improving efficiency, developing trusting interpersonal relationships, and gaining the support of those “at the top.”<sup>285</sup> This is particularly useful for selective-intermittent ethnography in which time is a critical factor. At

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<sup>282</sup> Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (New York: Routledge, 1995), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=voia5txnkbQC&pg=PP1&dq=Ethnography:+Principles+in+Practice&hl=en&ei=5L4Ta3sO4H4gAeohPCrDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Ethnography%3A%20Principles%20in%20Practice&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=voia5txnkbQC&pg=PP1&dq=Ethnography:+Principles+in+Practice&hl=en&ei=5L4Ta3sO4H4gAeohPCrDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Ethnography%3A%20Principles%20in%20Practice&f=false), 60.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

other times, however, the gatekeeper may be anxious to please and thus shape the information as related to what they think the researcher might want, or may be reticent about “being found out” or “being criticized” by the expert and thus seek to direct the research by withholding and/or redacting the information – particularly that of a “sensitive” nature.<sup>286</sup> Being unaware of such dynamics can taint objectivity in the data, and if the effects of “expert” power are not minimized in the process of obtaining knowledge, the “ethnographer herself comes under scrutiny.”<sup>287</sup> Finlay and Gough therefore discuss reflexivity as an “invaluable tool” for “deconstructing and challenging perceptions of the research consultants as ‘the experts,’”<sup>288</sup> lowering the barrier between researcher and researched.<sup>289</sup>

This “power-differential” dynamic become quite relevant as I contacted confirmation directors in the second year research to discuss the initiation process. I commonly described my background in the western suburbs of Minneapolis in order to present myself as an “insider” with an emic perspective and gain greater access. The significance of this approach cannot be overestimated. Minneapolis is in a state where many social norms are governed by a vaguely defined set of cultural characteristics known as ‘Minnesota Nice’ – describing the ideal Minnesota type as a person “(of) polite friendliness, (with) an aversion to confrontation, and emotional restraint.....critics of Minnesota Nice call this behavior

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Rahel Wasserfall, “Reflexivity, Feminism, and Difference,” *Qualitative Sociology* 16, no. 1 (1993): 25, <http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.bethel.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&hid=14&sid=e8a27e5c-d96d-46b6-a66e-614291e83b5f%40sessionmgr4>.

<sup>288</sup> Majella McFadden and Allison McCamley, “Using Reflexivity to Loosen Theoretical and Organisational Knots Within Participatory Action Research,” in *Reflexivity: A Practical Guide for Researchers in Health and Social Sciences*, ed. Linda Finlay and Brendan Gough (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=SqIArXKGXkC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Reflexivity:+A+Practical+Guide+for+Researchers+in+Health+and+Social+Sciences&hl=en&ei=Xeb4TZz2OcrSgQfmqnyCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=SqIArXKGXkC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Reflexivity:+A+Practical+Guide+for+Researchers+in+Health+and+Social+Sciences&hl=en&ei=Xeb4TZz2OcrSgQfmqnyCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 207.

<sup>289</sup> Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher. Using Our Selves in Research* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2004), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=koATh9uSpIkC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Becoming+a+Reflexive+Researcher.&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=jef4TdG7JqT20gHahc3YCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=koATh9uSpIkC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Becoming+a+Reflexive+Researcher.&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=jef4TdG7JqT20gHahc3YCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 27.

passive-aggressive and bridle at never knowing for sure what Minnesotans think.”<sup>290</sup> My experience growing up meant outsiders were not trusted, and one needed to be an insider in order to gain access to information and relationships. This mistrust of outsiders tends to be the result of an inferiority complex common to Minnesotans as they compare themselves to the more fashionable East and West coasts of America. Garrison Keillor, the Minnesota-based storyteller of “Prairie Home Companion” broadcast worldwide, states, “Your birthright as a Minnesota is a powerful inferiority complex.”<sup>291</sup>

However, I was also aware Minnesotans tend to value those who “make a name for themselves” as they consistently venerate famous athletes, writers, and movie stars from their home state.<sup>292</sup> Experiencing the world outside of Minnesota and attaining a degree of success is important, so I identified my association with the University of Edinburgh as a Ph.D. student and as one who had already spent a year of research in several parishes in order to enhance the value of their association with me and persuade them to participate in the project. Thus, I was the insider who was also an outsider who had “accomplished” more than the typical Minnesotan resident and was likely going to be worthy of respect in their eyes. This insider/outsider approach seemed to gain their trust, and the confirmation directors worked with me. However, it also created the unintended consequence in which they sometimes viewed me as an expert – which, as discussed above, may create problems for the validity of information gained.

To minimize the effects of this perceived expertise and power differential in the interviews, I attempted two different methods. Firstly, I made an intentional effort to state the

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Garrison Keillor, “Where I Come From,” 2009, <http://english.umn.edu/alumni/stories.html>.

<sup>292</sup> Jim Caple, “For Twins Fans He’s Mr. Minnesota,” 17 July 2009, [http://sports.espn.go.com/mlb/columns/story?columnist=caple\\_jim&id=4331383](http://sports.espn.go.com/mlb/columns/story?columnist=caple_jim&id=4331383). This nationally prominent website describes the significance Minnesotans ascribe to Joe Mauer, the Minnesota born catcher who was voted Most Valuable Player in Major League Baseball last year and plays for the hometown professional baseball team, the Minnesota Twins. This is just one example of the importance of “being from Minnesota.”

confirmation directors were on the “front lines” conducting the initiation process and therefore had the most insight into what was happening and what should happen. My role was simply to describe the situation and look for evidence of patterns that might help explain the phenomenon of disappearing initiates. I did not have their thorough understanding of history and tradition, nor their grasp of internal parish dynamics. Secondly, I tended to ask many questions and stay genuinely interested in their answers to underscore their expertise. The resulting interviews tended to be wide-ranging, and appeared to me balanced as I sensed they were comfortable with both the positive and negative dimensions of the initiation process – including the fact they did not know where their initiates were.

The descriptions above represent some of the more significant ways in which disconfirming evidence and reflexivity minimized the effects of bias and enhanced the validity of the research. These examples, plucked from many, indicate an awareness of possible bias as related to the research and the methodology of the fieldwork.

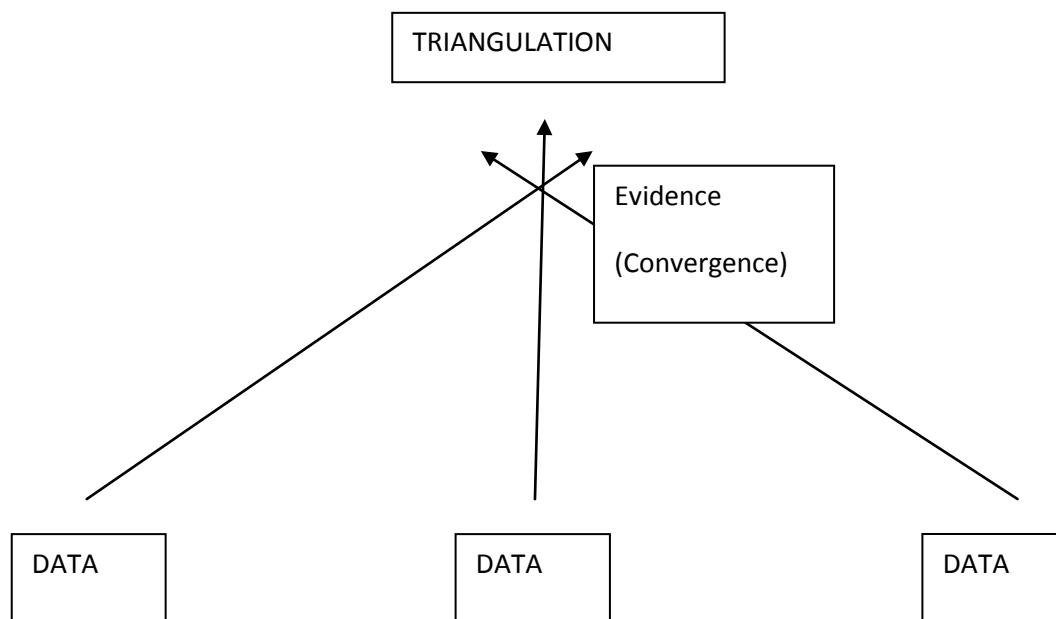
**Methodological Issue #4:**     *Limitations of a Specific Data-Gathering Method*  
**Strategy:**                     *Multiple Modes of Data Collection and Triangulation*

The final issue related to validity in qualitative research relates to the limitation of a singular data gathering method. Surveys can be biased by the manner in which the proctor administers them, the way in which the questions are formed, and the interpretation of subjective responses. Participant and non-participant observation requires interpreting the experience through the lens of the researcher’s bias and evaluation. Interviewees may consciously or unconsciously withhold information or deliberately misdirect, edit their answers to please the researcher, or even outright deceive. To account for such limitations qualitative researchers commonly employ a process called triangulation.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Stephen Gorard and Chris Taylor, *Combining Methods in Educational and Social Research* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2004), Google Books, <http://books.google.com/books?id=Jy1sbkAGfCoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Combining+Methods+in+Educati>

Triangulation happens when there is a convergence of similar data gathered in differentiated research instruments. This differentiation occurs by using the same technique over an extended length of time, through comparing the notes of two different researchers, or, as was the case in this fieldwork, using multiple data collection methods and analyzing the results for patterns and consistent trends.<sup>294</sup> Where the data converges, as seen in the figure below, the researcher internally verifies the findings of one research tool with that of another.<sup>295</sup> Thus, the benefit of triangulation lies in the fact it “counteracts (the) threat to validity inherent in each method used by balancing the strengths and weaknesses of all measures, sources of data, etc.”<sup>296</sup>



onal+and+Social+Research&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=Pej4TeKuO8Xh0QHxoLWZCw&sa=X&oi=book\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false, 43.

<sup>294</sup> Margot Ely, *Doing Qualitative Research: Circles Within Circles* (London: The Falmer Press, 1991), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=cXKZ-F20z\\_wC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Doing+Qualitative+Research:+Circles+Within+Circles&hl=en&ei=qOj4TdTYLOeo0AGQv-](http://books.google.com/books?id=cXKZ-F20z_wC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Doing+Qualitative+Research:+Circles+Within+Circles&hl=en&ei=qOj4TdTYLOeo0AGQv-WHCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

WHCw&sa=X&oi=book\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false, 97.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Inger P. Davis, “Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Clinical Research,” in *Qualitative Research in Social Work*, ed. Edward Sherman, and William Reid (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=hnMakjG9yMYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Qualitative+Research+in+Social+Work&hl=en&ei=9Oj4TYbwAYaRswbCwqCKCQ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CDYQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=hnMakjG9yMYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Qualitative+Research+in+Social+Work&hl=en&ei=9Oj4TYbwAYaRswbCwqCKCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CDYQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false), 424.



## ***Application to Dissertation (Modes of Data Collection and Triangulation)***

### **Data Collection Method #1: *Observation***

I chose the role of non-participant observer for several reasons. Firstly, as described above related to intermittent ethnography, I could not spend a lengthy time in a single parish, rather I could survey and interview across a variety of parishes and Protestant churches for comparison. Secondly, the churches involved have a minimum of five hundred parishioners in a *Gesellschaft* context, therefore, it was not possible to understand the fabric of relational realities in such a short time. Finally, I would not be participating in the initiation process therefore, a true “insider” experience was functionally impossible. As a result, I employed a non-participant strategy of observing weekly programs as well as several meetings and interactions among the people in the different parishes.

### **Data Collection Method #2: *Interviews***

As a non-participant observer, I needed to gain access to the emic perspective through additional methods to avoid being solely dependent on my own interpretation of the events and conversations I observed. Therefore, direct, in-depth interviewing, a common method employed by ethnographers, became an important strategy and was, in fact, the core method for attaining information. It became apparent at the end of the first year I would not find past initiates in meaningful numbers, so I needed to identify the people who could best contribute to understanding my previous and evolving experience.<sup>297</sup> The experience of the first year enabled me to target the accessible people, define the purposes and parameters for the conversations and inquire whether a given informant would be willing to participate.<sup>298</sup> The results of these interviews are presented in the next chapter.

At its best, interviewing is concurrently reflexive in that the conversation is always dynamic forcing the interviewer to reflect, react, and respond based on the shape and focus of

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<sup>297</sup> Lindlof and Taylor, *Methods*, 172.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

the conversation. In this way, interviewing is more of an art than a science. Even if certain topics are predetermined, the interview is not a defined script, each one being unique. The researcher must identify the uniqueness of an interchange and situation in terms of nuances, mannerisms, inflections, tones hesitations, stories, expressions, and gesticulations as additional information is gained by noticing that which is beyond the surface level of the interaction. Recognizing these subtleties shapes the direction of the conversation and what is required to gain critical data as an interview “is normally carried out in a face-to-face setting with multiple extra channels of communication” that provide more information regarding the emic perspective.<sup>299</sup>

Beyond the ability to engage fluidly in conversation and note non-verbal cues, the researcher must also take care in the kinds of questions asked. Questions can encourage or discourage response, open up shy people, bring focus to those more talkative, or create an engaging direction in which a flood of insider information comes to the surface.<sup>300</sup> In general, researchers should have a basic interview template prior to engaging in conversation which can either be of a formal, standardized structure such as that of a survey approach, or more of a generalized guide which evolves based on the specific nature of the conversation. I chose the latter course of action to maximize the possibilities of discovery within the interviews. The following chapter presents the scope of these interviews; at this point, it is simply important to note a second strategy for data collection that allows for triangulation of the information.

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<sup>299</sup> Tom Wengraf, *Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=c2b6jQ8g3sAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Qualitative+Research+Interviewing&hl=en&ei=hOr4TfzrAdK2tgf08cTVcG&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=c2b6jQ8g3sAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Qualitative+Research+Interviewing&hl=en&ei=hOr4TfzrAdK2tgf08cTVcG&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 47.

<sup>300</sup> Lindlof and Taylor, *Methods*, 194.

### **Data Collection Method #3: Survey**

The third method of data collection, and a lesser one, utilized in the research was that of a general, qualitative survey. In contrast to quantitative surveys that tend to contain short, closed-end questions with scales and continuums, qualitative surveys usually feature open-ended questions to which the respondents comment freely and even give mini-essays.<sup>301</sup> As such, quantitative surveys usually depend on sophisticated statistical analysis in both their design and interpretation while qualitative surveys tend to require the kind of analysis in which the researcher “filter(s) the response through his or her understanding of the respondent’s intentions.”<sup>302</sup> For the researcher, it means carefully identifying key concepts, phrases, themes, or sentences in order to better quantify the open-ended data.<sup>303</sup>

One short survey was found useful in this research, near the end of the process when I determined to get the best possible data from disappearing initiates themselves, despite the fact they could not be located in a given parish context. Therefore, I contacted the largest Catholic university in the Minneapolis area to describe the project and inquire whether I could survey a population of their undergraduates regarding their initiation experience. I designed the survey around basic closed-ended questions to gain background information about the subjects, and then included a lengthy open-ended section in which they could comment on their initiation experience. The content of the survey is included in the following chapter with a full analysis in chapter six. At this point, it is sufficient to note that a third method of data collection was used in order to establish validity through means of triangulation.

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<sup>301</sup> Arlene Fink, *How To Conduct Surveys: A Step-by-Step Guide* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2009), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=ca9E1H08PrEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=How+To+Conduct+Surveys:+A+StepbyStep+Guide&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=0r4Td3PIjQgAeXkaGBDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=ca9E1H08PrEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=How+To+Conduct+Surveys:+A+StepbyStep+Guide&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=0r4Td3PIjQgAeXkaGBDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 89.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

### **III. Conclusion**

In summary, the methodological issues facing any qualitative researcher are common and many, and failing to address them systematically can compromise the validity of fieldwork. Therefore, this chapter attempted to deal with the issues most relevant to the current research by summarizing their general nature and the means by which researchers commonly address them, and then discussing their specific application as part of this fieldwork. In each case, achieving the highest degree of validity as related to the data gathered was the primary consideration. With this methodological frame in mind, attention can now turn to the specifics of the fieldwork itself conducted over a two-year time period – research that is outlined over the next two chapters.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**Research Process: Year One**  
*Evolution of Research Thesis*

**I. Introduction**

I submitted a preliminary thesis and fieldwork proposal at the end of my first year in the program. The proposal focused on values ontology and internalization among Catholic initiates of the past five to ten years and how they negotiated initiation values vis-à-vis their disconnected social environments in a *Gesellschaft* system. I intended to spend six months as a non-participant observer studying the sociological dynamics of a wealthy Catholic parish in the western suburbs of Minneapolis. The study centered on interviewing approximately fifty past initiates from which to base an analysis of their negotiation process, and included supplementary interviews of other relevant informants in the initiation process to gain a broad-based perspective of the ritual process in this context. In addition, I proposed spending six months of similar research in a nearby Protestant church as a comparative sample. These interviews formed the main methodology for gathering data, and their scope, taken from the original proposal is outlined in Figure One below.

**Figure One**  
*Scope of Interviews*

**Core Interviews**

1. 35-50 past initiates of the previous 5-10 years;
  - a. interviews would be 30-50 minutes and revolve around their confirmation experience,
    - i. how it affects them today,
    - ii. views of confirmation
    - iii. views of the morality/religion in the world around them
2. Confirmation Director
3. Catechism Instructors
  - a. 4-6 instructors from that same time frame

**Supplementary Interviews**

1. 4-6 interviewees from two generations removed who were "soldiers of Christ"
2. 10-15 parents of the past initiates
3. past and present clergy/members of staff
4. 5-7 current members of the community
5. 8-10 current confirmands and families
6. 8-10 current catechists

Actual research among the initiates, however, caused the thesis to evolve from studying values internalization among past initiates to describing dissonance between institutional guidelines, the local practice of initiation, and local outcomes.<sup>304</sup> As noted above, this change in focus led to an unplanned, but necessary additional year of research – a process described in the following chapter. Before presenting the narrative of this chapter, however, several important details need stating by way of context.

Firstly, while the chapter does include some analysis within the narrative, the bulk of the analysis is reserved for the final two chapters of the dissertation. Secondly, the initiation organizers in each parish were extremely busy. It was common for me to wait two or three weeks at a time before interacting with them regarding a single step in the research process. This explains why the research took an extended time, and why selective intermittent ethnography was an appropriate method as the interviews occurred in short segments after weeks of trying to gain access. Thirdly, I did conduct research and interviews in the Protestant church on a concurrent basis over the course of this first year. However, the presentation of this material is reserved for the analysis chapters in the context of comparative analysis. Nothing is said about that context in this chapter as the point here is to demonstrate the specific pattern of dissonance between institution and parish in initiation while hinting at the evolution that is outlined in the final chapter. Finally, I refer to most of the organizers as “confirmation directors.” This is because each parish still followed the medieval initiation order of baptism, Eucharist, and confirmation. Some initiation organizers supervised the tripartite process, while others only gave oversight to confirmation as the last

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<sup>304</sup> Harry F. Wolcott, *Writing Up Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2009), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=uK81O\\_7Bur4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Writing+Up+Qualitative+Research&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=6Ln6TdexHuqr0AH6KWFAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=uK81O_7Bur4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Writing+Up+Qualitative+Research&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=6Ln6TdexHuqr0AH6KWFAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 25. Wolcott suggests an appropriate approach for presenting fieldwork is to “introduce the study in the manner that you actually experienced it, reaching as far back as necessary to put things in context.” The narrative follows this philosophy in presentation style as going back to the original research design is necessary to show how the thesis changed based on the data. This results in a higher degree of validity in that my presuppositions were confronted and forced to change.

step in the ritual. In each case, I targeted these people as my primary contact and bridge into the community since they had the most recent interactions with past initiates. With these clarifications in place, then, the four sections of this first year narrative represent the four churches that participated to some degree in the research, and demonstrate how the unanticipated rate of initiate attrition changed the original thesis design.

## **II. Initiate Attrition and the Failure to Locate Them**

### **Contact One: *St. Augustine Catholic Church***<sup>305</sup>

I contacted St. Augustine via e-mail while in Edinburgh to inquire about their possible participation in the project. St. Augustine is a Catholic church that is part of a community of over 50,000 people approximately five miles from where I grew up. Weekend attendance commonly exceeds 1,000 parishioners spread over four masses, and there are over 100 youth in the initiation program each year. I contacted the lead priest, Father John, via e-mail in October of 2005 to inquire about conducting fieldwork beginning in August of 2006. My inquiry included both emic and etic perspectives as a means of gaining trust as an “insider,” and respect as one who ventured beyond the Minnesota context. Father John did not reply personally, referring me to the Director for Faith Formation in Middle School, Beth Gardson. As is seen below, Beth invited further conversations, but expressed reservations, in regards to the proposal.

#### ***E-Mail Exchange, St. Augustine / 31 October, 2005***

Dear Father John,

My name is Peter Kapsner and I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. I am researching the degree to which Confirmands are "internalizing" the values versus "consenting" to the values. It seems "internalization" has to do with transformation/formation and long-term change while "consent" has more to do with external agreement to fulfill obligation.

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<sup>305</sup> All names of churches and those involved in the interviews have been changed to protect privacy.

I will be returning to MN next August and am looking for a parish in which I can study while doing interviews. I am wondering if you would be open to and/or have interest in helping me with such a study.

I grew up a few miles from St. Augustine. I attended St. Hubert's as a child. My wife, Hallie, and I have been pastors. I most recently taught Theology and Bible at (local) University. Therefore, my background has been a mix of Catholic and Protestant. Thank you for your consideration. I hope to hear from you soon.

Peter Kapsner

Dear Peter,

My name is Beth Gardson and I am the Director of Faith Formation for Middle School and Senior High Faith Formation. As such, about a third of my job description includes the confirmation program. Father John passed on your email to me, and several of us discussed your request for our parish to participate in your study. We do have some reservations and many questions however, and do not feel we have enough information to say yes or no. Father John and Father Leo and I had set up Thursday, 11:00 a.m. here for talking about your study (5 pm your time.) Father Leo is free.

Sincerely,

Beth Gardson

Director of Middle School and Senior High Faith Formation

After several more e-mail interchanges focused on conversation logistics, I phoned that Thursday for a question-and-answer session lasting twenty minutes. The priests seemed hospitable, at ease, and interested during the dialogue – agreeing with the central premise that there may be a discrepancy in values internalization among Catholic initiates as they negotiate future social contexts. The conversation was fluid, there were no awkward silences, and we even laughed from time-to-time. Their only expressed concern related to the amount of work this could add to Beth's job requirements as she was busy overseeing a large initiation program as well as some additional responsibilities related to the children in the church. Overall, however, they did not have any issues with the *idea* of the project and



seemed amenable to helping me conduct the fieldwork. I followed up by sending them the written guidelines of the proposal.

Beth, by contrast, seemed decidedly more guarded during this conversation and in subsequent interchanges over the next three months as she reviewed my proposal and we considered the feasibility of the project. She also expressed various reservations to participating in the study, one of her more pertinent and significant concerns relating to the complex and vague nature of current initiation practice in general, and confirmation theology in particular. She wrote:

One of my concerns is that Confirmation in the Catholic Church doesn't have a clear theology. Although it has been seen as a Rite of Passage in practice, in theology it is a completion of baptism, and being sealed with the Holy Spirit that was given at Baptism. With the increase of participation in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), our sacramental practice for Confirmation has been tempered by an understanding of what initiation really is. I am really uncomfortable with calling Confirmation a Rite of Passage, even though many adults would still see it as that. It is really a fullness of the gift of the Holy Spirit, so not something that the person does him/herself.<sup>306</sup>

Beth is here referring to factors she believes contribute to theological, functional, and procedural “vagueness” in initiation practice in her context. She attributed this lack of clarity to two decrees issued from the Vatican II Council: the establishment of RCIA, and the restored order of the sacraments. In regards to the first, the sacramental process historically established boundaries for insider/outsider status within the church and determined who may fully participate in the life of the body. This function remains emphasized among youth initiation in her context as they are granted full membership privileges at the end of the process. However, the RCIA was issued by the Council with evangelistic pretexts as part of the “Decree of the Mission Activity,” and is to introduce those not born into the Catholic

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<sup>306</sup> Beth Gardson. E-mail exchange recorded in January of 2006 after I presented the full scope of the dissertation inquiry.

Church to the Christian life.<sup>307</sup> As such, the language and process of RCIA tends to avoid initiation language and insider/outsider dimensions (outside of the title), and instead invites people to a lifelong journey of faith formation.<sup>308</sup>

However, in local parish function, the insider/outsider dimension remains a significant consideration. For example, one of the more common motivations of those participating in RCIA relates to entering into a “mixed” marriage of Catholic and non-Catholic religions.<sup>309</sup> Since Catholic marriage requires both parties to be Catholic, the RCIA provides a method for adults to be initiated in order to fulfill the demands of the marriage sacrament.<sup>310</sup> This means confirmation tends to fill a number of different purposes in a given parish. For youth, they complete their baptism and are initiated into full membership in the church. For adults not baptized RC as infants, confirmation is part of a journey of faith formation (and perhaps marriage law) in which they are introduced to the Christian life, but it still has an incorporation function. This is why Beth indicated a lack of clarity on this issue.

In addition to the functional issues created by the RCIA, the second decree restoring the sacramental order to be consistent with early church practice creates a procedural and theological discrepancy. The RCIA follows this “restored order” and is characterized by a significant period of instruction before the three-fold initiation ritual of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist in immediate and consecutive order on Easter Vigil. The meaning of the sacraments is also consistent with early church theology in the washing away

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<sup>307</sup> Vatican II documents, “On the Mission Activity of the Church,”

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_ad-gentes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html).

<sup>308</sup> The focus of the sacramental process outlined by Vatican II appears to be on inviting those into the Christian life as defined by the practices of the church. Participants may enter and exit the process as they choose as the decree’s main “stated” purpose is to make the faith accessible to those outside the church. Yet to continue in the church, one must finish the process. This is part of the lack of clarity.

<sup>309</sup> United States Council of Catholic Bishops, “Telephone Interviews,” February 2000, <http://www.nccbuscc.org/evangelization/appendixc.shtml#partii>.

<sup>310</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Journey to the Fullness of Life. A Report on the RCIA in the United States,” October 2000, <http://usccb.org/evangelization/journey.shtml>.

of sin, conferring of the Spirit, and sharing in the table of fellowship. However, in contrast to RCIA, youth initiation in Beth's context has retained its medieval form as youth receive Eucharist around the age of eight, well before their confirmation. As opposed to RCIA, baptized adolescents already have a certain degree of "insider" status by virtue of their Eucharist participation communion; yet they also must be confirmed even though they already have the Spirit.

According to Beth, the purpose of confirmation becomes vague and difficult to explain in this context as the two processes and purposes of initiation are quite different. Youth initiation organizers seem to increasingly emphasize that Confirmation involves receiving the fullness of the Spirit for individual formation and empowerment, and deemphasizing that it completes the initiation process into the membership of the Church. Yet if an adolescent refused to enter the confirmation process, they would not retain their "insider" status. This lack of clarity lies at the heart of the sacramental process.<sup>311</sup>

We continued email dialogue until February of 2006 trying to work through these various issues and design an appropriate study. However, it became increasingly clear there would be insurmountable barriers to the research and Beth ultimately declined to participate in this study, citing a lack of time and energy as the primary reason.<sup>312</sup> It seemed working

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<sup>311</sup> Such discrepancies were new information for me though I did not fully grasp their implications at the time. In retrospect, a study related to values internalization and negotiation would have been difficult in a context where the values themselves as taught across multiple contexts by various people may not be consistent. Therefore, there would be no "baseline" confirmation or initiation theological values from which to interview past initiates and their negotiation of a *Gesellschaft* context.

<sup>312</sup> Dear Peter,

After prayerfully reviewing again all your emails, and consulting my boss as well as others on the Faith Formation staff, I have decided that St. Augustine confirmation candidates will not be able to participate in your study next fall. We do not have the resources to give the time and energy needed to this study. I apologize for the inconvenience this will cause you, but I wish you all the best in your endeavor. I pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to a community able to receive your request.

Sincerely yours,

Beth Gardson

through the nuances of the process in a discrepant context would be difficult to achieve. However, in later reading back through our interchanges, I found Beth offered important clues as to another possible, but unstated reason why this study might prove difficult; initiate attrition.

As I analyzed our interchanges and her critique of the interview scope, I found she stated those interested in study participation would be only those who did internalize initiation values and would thus be motivated to help. This may or may not have proved true, but her concern pointed indirectly to initiate attrition as, in her opinion, those volunteering for the study would be those who still had some measure of contact with the church. By virtue of this differentiation, her concern indicates there are those who do not have regular contact with the church. However, I did not recognize the significance when she wrote this since I was under the mistaken impression that it was unusual to not have initiates who were not still active in the church. I remained confident that, given time, we could find enough past initiates not in the church for comparison. I did not know at this point, however, that there was a high rate of attrition and, in fact, the majority of past initiates did not have regular, ongoing contact with the parish. Beth revealed in later interviews conducted in 2007 that past initiates would be difficult to locate as St. Augustine did not have any kind of follow-up program in place.<sup>313</sup> She said, “We don’t track anything. We don’t even send a letter afterwards (after Confirmation).”

As this information came later, I assumed at the time the reasons for Beth’s lack of participation did relate to her workload and the sociological and theological issues she described. Therefore, I did not think to redesign the research process when she declined to

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<sup>313</sup> As is seen in the second section of this chapter, Beth and I retained our relationship despite the fact St. Augustine did not participate in the study at this time. She was a very helpful resource throughout the following year.

participate, but instead sought other initiation organizers in the Minneapolis area to fulfill the scope of the interview process. Through a mutual relationship, I contacted with Patrick Collins, the Confirmation Director at St. Benedict's Catholic Church. I did get started with the interviews in this context, and here I was exposed to the first direct data that past initiates would prove quite difficult to locate.

### **Contact #2: *St. Benedict's Catholic Church***

I began exchanging e-mails with Patrick to discuss the possibilities of fieldwork in St. Benedict's – a parish approximately ten miles from where I grew up and roughly the same size as St. Augustine's. Patrick was interested and wanted to see the details of the interviews. The proposal I sent was the same as that sent to St. Augustine, and while Patrick did not express reservations about the project, he did note, "It looks like a lot of interviews but I am happy to be a part of it. I will begin assembling a list of potential candidates and rounding up their contact information." We continued to exchange logistical e-mails and I told him I would come to the church when we came to the United States in August.

By the time I arrived for the start of the Confirmation program in the fall, Patrick had a number of contacts arranged for interviews over the first two months of fieldwork. These included himself, four men in their sixties and seventies who met weekly to discuss a book on the sacraments, and catechists and confirmands involved in the current weekly confirmation meetings. While Patrick had not yet arranged for interviews with past initiates, he also did not indicate this would be a barrier when we met and began the fieldwork. While I waited for those interviews, I followed through on the arrangements he had made.

However, after a few weeks I learned that while Patrick located presently participating members of the parish for interviews, he was having trouble locating initiates from the past ten years: he found none despite the fact around 700 confirmands completed

their initiation during the past decade. We discussed the project on a weekly basis and when I asked about interviewing past initiates, Patrick looked a bit hesitant and reported no progress, even while reassuring me he would figure out what to do. At the end of eight weeks, his primary suggestion was that he would ask his son who attended a nearby Catholic university if there were any initiates from St. Benedict. I grew concerned about the research at this point, but decided we still had four months set aside to find past initiates and would be able to determine a method to get in touch with them. Therefore, I continued conducting supplementary interviews, and attempting to arrange others, to fulfill the scope of the proposed research. The following sub-sections describe the extent of the information gathered in these interviews and in my observation of the process – condensed to highlight pertinent information related to initiate attrition.

### ***Meetings and Interviews with Older Gentlemen***

Among the first meetings Patrick organized included joining four older men who met weekly for ninety minutes on Wednesday mornings to read, *Doors to the Sacred*, by Joseph Martos. The men were interested in sacramental history and took turns reading the text page-by-page before discussing the chapter as a whole. This is one of the few times I conducted participant observation as I read the text with them and entered the discussion. We also took time in the meetings to discuss my project as they had questions and opinions related to the initiation process. When asked about values internalization, they seemed disgruntled with the lack of discipline among the youth as compared with their generation, believed the church just “isn’t what it used to be,” and regularly called on me to help changed the sacramental program. Some of their criticisms are shown in excerpts in Figure Two, and were among the first pieces of evidence I gathered pointing to dissonance in the initiation process at the local level.

**Figure Two: Edited Excerpts of Interview with Older Men**

“The nuns taught us exactly what Confirmation was....soldiers of Christ, now no one knows exactly what it is.....”

“The problem with Confirmation today is where why and how they do it. I know it’s a bishop problem....when I say that, I mean that with all these churches....it’s a mass thing. It really came home to root with my kids about how impersonal it is. I agree. They do it (final service) all over the cities and down at the Basilica and there’s nothing to it.....”

“(They are doing it thinking) I’m living at home, have to play by the rules, I can tolerate this as long as my buddies are tolerating this.....”

“So many Catholics....the adults, the parents, don’t understand what Confirmation is. The Jewish parents, they all know what a Bar Mitzvah is...they’re now rooted in the Jewish faith. They’re brought in as a real member....we don’t do that here.....The parents don’t even know that much about their own religion to pass along and to give anything to their kids.”

“Though as they get through this and go out and go to college and have kids, how advanced will they be in order to pass their beliefs down. Or will they have the beliefs to pass down?”

In the opinions of this group of men, the sense of what it means to “be Catholic” was mostly lost in their parish. The confirmands do not know nor care about the initiation process and the church, and their parents are equally uninformed. The comparison to Jewish initiation is particularly pertinent in that it describes a rite of passage in which incorporation into a community and way of life is expected. Regardless of whether this perception is actually accurate for Jewish initiation in America, the men held a sociological assumption that initiation should result in incorporation and not the apathy and attrition they observed. They also held the parents responsible and emphasized their education since they, in their opinion, knew little of the faith. There was clearly dissatisfaction among them.

I did not at this time relate their comments to dynamics of initiate attrition even though, looking back, it seems clear that if their perceptions were accurate, there would be little post-initiation reincorporation. I was still looking for evidence related to values internalization and working under the incorrect assumption past initiates would be easy to locate. I therefore interpreted the men’s comments to be a dissonance among generations and

their perceptions of the church as while old and young were actively participating in the church, there was some trouble getting along. This was a common part of my own church experience growing up in this culture which contributed to my inability to relate their information to initiate attrition since my friends and I stayed in the church in which we were dissatisfied. Thus, with the perceptions of the older generation in mind, I attended the current confirmation program to gain the perspective of the younger generation as well as those working with them, hoping to gain something related to values internalization.

### ***Wednesday Confirmation Program: Observations and Catechist Interview***

I observed the active Confirmation program on Wednesday evenings. Each meeting consisted of a 25-minute interactive lecture given to eighty initiates, and the teaching revolved around more basic notions of church history, theology and epistemology. The initiates were fifteen or sixteen years old and did not seem to have much background information on these subjects – perhaps corroborating the criticisms of the older men. Following the large-group presentation, the confirmands split into smaller groups led by two catechists to discuss the material and reflect on its meaning. I noted the behavior of the initiates during these evenings to see if they seemed interested in the church and the values of the initiation process by observing their mannerisms, reactions, and other forms of non-verbal behavior, for example.

The majority arrived individually in cars driven by their parents and were dropped off at the front door of the church. The parents did not typically get out of the cars to escort their children into the church meeting hall, but instead promptly drove away. As the initiates came into the hall, they tended to huddle in groups of three or four and did not interact outside this immediate circle of friends. They walked around the meeting space and outer hallways in their tight circles, and as I watched and listened to them, I noticed most conversations revolved around sports, school, peer events, friendships, and the opposite gender. I did not



once overhear any initiate discussing matters of initiation during this time. When the lecture began, the initiates seemed mostly disengaged except for two or three that answered questions posed by Patrick. They looked similarly apathetic during their small group time and appeared to me to be simply waiting to get to the end of the process.

I planned on interviewing several of these confirmands to confirm my observations, but was unable to accomplish this because – as become clear later in this section – the research suddenly ended. However I did interview catechists during this time. My questions at this point were broad-based, related to their experience in the program, and meant to contribute to the research values internalization as I determined current catechists would be in a position to describe the mindset of the initiates. As already stated, I did not yet target information related to initiate attrition because I did not understand the pervasiveness of this issue. However, as with the older men, there were hints of initiation dissonance as seen in the verbatim excerpts of one catechist provided in Figure Three.

**Figure Three: Interview with Small-Group Leader**

Me:	You were confirmed here?
Catechist:	Hmmmm...was that a school deal? I never went to Religious Education, so I think it was in school...in class. We went down and got slapped and you received the Holy Spirit right then and there...and I was like....Bishop Roach...yeah man, we got the guy! I can't remember (the service), we were all in line, you could only bring your sponsor, no one else because it was packed, so I want to say hundreds and pretty close to 1000 people and there are 500 plus sponsors so you go up and WHACK....next! You received the Holy Spirit right there and its coming down and slap. Now I don't know what the rite of passage is, but that was a big deal to see THE MAN...It was him, the pope and God and he gave it to me and I got it now. So that was a big symbol.
Me:	How is that (like the current program)...what happens now?
Catechist:	The program just changed this year and we are in the dark.... They go through all the motions but it's empty...token....you go to church and it's so empty...So most of them (initiates) I've had somewhere (other contexts) and when they know I do this, it cushions the blow....look at this guy, he chews sunflower seeds and an occasional "f***" comes out of his mouth, and he yells at me, but he's still that guy, drives his

motorcycle and pick-up and you guys can ride in the back, and he's still this guy and this is what he believes in. Hopefully that's the message I'm sending these guys. You can grow up to be whoever you want to be.....and be true to yourself.
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In analyzing his words, the catechist knew little of Catholic initiation theology as evidenced in both the description of his own initiation and why he is helping initiates now. His participation in the program related to spending time with the youth to help construct an individualized sense of identity during the formative adolescent years. In addition, he did not indicate at any point in the interview a desire to see the youth join him in the church community with the requisite responsibilities. He spent the majority of the thirty minutes with me discussing his own experience and how this informed the messages he sends to current initiates. Just as he wanted to be free to discover himself in his youth, so too should the initiates be free to do the same and not worry about the constraint of authority.

Additionally, community reincorporation was not evident at the end of his own process as his final initiation steps took place in a central basilica in Minneapolis. This basilica holds well over 1,000 people, and the initiation was part of a mass celebration that did not include people from his local parish. While his entrance into the invisible community of the worldwide Catholic Church was part of this experience, there did not seem to be celebration of his initiation at the local level with those with whom he lived, worked, and raised a family. He didn't even remember, for certain, if his confirmation teaching happened at church or school. This form of incorporation makes sense in a *Gesellschaft* context in which local ties do not play a prominent role, but it does contribute to the dissonance of initiate attrition as they do not have significant relationships within the parish in which they live. This became quite evident in the next series of interviews in which I met with initiates who completed the process in the past two years.

### ***Wednesday Confirmation Program: Recent Initiates***

On one Wednesday evening, Patrick invited me to another part of the church to connect with a smaller group consisting of past initiates of the previous two initiation classes. Meeting them was a significant moment in which I first encountered the high rates of initiation attrition and realized my initial research thesis may prove difficult to achieve. I was led out of the central meeting area of current confirmands and down a darkened, empty hallway to a small, bare classroom. Here I found that on the same Wednesday evening bustling with eighty current initiates in a central part of the church, just eight initiates of the past two years gathered for an ad hoc, unsupervised meeting. This was not an official church program, there was no text or curriculum to follow nor adult supervisors – only a room provided for meeting. Nearly 200 initiates completed the process during the past two years and would still be living at home and attending their local schools within a few miles of the church, yet only this small group of them returned to the church for post-initiation meetings.

I requested an interview with one of the confirmands. She stated she had Catholic friends in her life but all of them at gone through initiation at St. Augustine's, not St. Benedict's. She was mobile enough to be involved in several disparate social spheres in a twenty-mile radius, and as a result, most of her Catholic friends came from school and extra-curricular activities. The lone exception was a friend named Kjersten who had not been active in the church except for the initiation process, and was not active now. The interviewee seemed to know very few people at St. Benedict's. I did not ask her specifically why she came on Wednesday evenings, but from feedback from other initiates in this group it became clear they were there because their brother or sister might be in the Confirmation program now and they had to drive them to the church – staying while the active confirmands met. The church simply unlocked a room where they could “hang out” and wait for their siblings.

Her comments and the overall situation were revealing on a number of levels. Firstly, and most obviously, there was no program at St. Benedict's for those who completed their initiation as they are just expected to be part of a larger mass of over 1,000 people on Sunday mornings. However, no one knows for sure if they are actually coming. Secondly, the interviewee indicated she did not have any friends beyond one that actually attend St. Benedict's on an ongoing basis. She went through the process with nearly 100 youth her own age and is now disconnected from them. Thirdly, the Catholic friends she did have seemed coincidental in that they happened to be part of the same affinity group or local school. Their relationship was not based on being Catholic, it was based on similar interests and she would have many non-Catholic friends in the same affinity group. Finally, it was apparent her agency was quite high in that she had friendships extended out several miles beyond her local parish. She would need a car to maintain these friendships, and it was clear she had one.<sup>314</sup>

Given the convergence of these dynamics, it became clear initiates were not expected to participate in the parish of their initiation when the process was over, and the church essentially loses contact with them post-initiation. This information left me wondering for the first time if I should continue the initial proposed line of inquiry which focused on past initiates if they could not be located. This question became more relevant as I reflected back on my initial interview with Patrick in which a joke he made revealed much about the state of initiation and reincorporation in this context.

### ***Interview with Patrick and the End of Research at St. Benedict***

Thus, in retrospect, the probability of initiate attrition should have been somewhat obvious given Patrick's early hesitation and my initial interview with him in regards to Catholic initiation. The interview lasted over an hour and was focused primarily on past and

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<sup>314</sup> The importance of the automobile as related to the age of confirmation is further outlined in the following chapter which describes the second year of research.

current practice and theology of initiation in the Catholic Church in general, and at St. Benedict's in particular. During one segment of the interview, Patrick revealed information related to the lack of reincorporation, and looking back through the full text of the interview revealed the following excerpt in Figure Four – which now made more sense in light of what I had learned in observing the process on Wednesday evenings.

**Figure Four: Interview with Patrick of St. Benedict**

- Me: Are the initiates 16-18 when they go through the process?
- Pat: You know it varies. When I was at St. Barts in the late 70's early 80's it was 8<sup>th</sup> grade. And now you are getting into the pragmatic part of it. A lot of it depends on school and stuff. So we have a lot of Catholic schools are K-8 and they feel they have to get them confirmed before they go to high school or we'll lose them. Schools and parishes actually, that's the worst way to do it because they associate it with graduation and then they don't have to do that crap anymore. Which is, we're teaching, we're going convergent now, and that's the latter step. We don't want to associate graduation with confirmation.
- Me: So there's a sense of "We're done, we did that and now we can kind of move on" something like that?
- Pat: Exactly. The old joke. The church is infested with squirrels. The town is infested with squirrels. One church can't get rid of them. We've tried predators and we can't get rid of them. We tried sound. We tried everything else. The Catholics said we got rid of them right away. Really, how did you do it. ***Well we confirmed them and we never saw them again!***
- Me: Wow. That's a good joke.
- Pat: Yeah, but unfortunately it's more true than you want to say.

Again, my presuppositions regarding initiate attrition as well as my rather skimpy knowledge of Catholic initiation affected my ability to listen, record, and concurrently analyze during this interview. Therefore, I did not fully grasp the implications of Patrick's joke related to the disappearing squirrels. While I figured this might be true of a certain percentage of past initiates, I failed to understand the scope and magnitude of the disappearance. However, after three months passed and I became concerned about the progress of the fieldwork, I remembered what Patrick had said. The disappearance was consistent with the fact Patrick still had not secured any interviews despite our repeated

conversations. He had not made contact with his son at the local university and did not seem enthusiastic about doing so. Unbeknownst to me, however, Patrick began working through unofficial “back channels” in the church to determine how he could get me this information – an effort not sanctioned by those in authority. He did not share this information because it was confidential at the time, and his decision led to a row with the lead priest and ultimately to the end of the research process.

Patrick requested a conversation about four months into the process and revealed he had attempted to access the church’s master computer database to procure a list of initiates who completed the process in the past ten years. However, his access was denied because of the reticence of the head priest, Father David. He said Father David did not feel it appropriate to release this kind of information to someone outside of the parish – claiming such a decision could come under the legal scrutiny of the Arch-Diocese. Patrick explained to Father David that St. Benedict could “hire” me to “work” in the church for \$1 per year so I could access the computers, and, in fact, the church had done this before for volunteers in the parish. In this way, even though there was no specific database of past initiates, I could search through the membership enrollment for names and phone numbers of those who had been through initiation the past ten years. Still, Father David declined his request at this point.

Patrick, however, told me he would determine a way to provide me with a list in order to complete the research. I waited a week until Patrick called me and said Father David demanded access to lists be permanently denied. Patrick had defied Father David’s initial decision, which led to heated conversations between them regarding the research in which Patrick argued on my behalf but gained no further support. I followed with a phone call to Father David and left a voice mail requesting him to reconsider. His return phone call was quite strained, which surprised me because Father David had, at least outwardly, been interested in the research based on our past conversations. Now, however, Father David

stated emphatically we could not proceed in this way and he was not, contrary to his perceptions of my opinion, trying to prevent the research. He was only protecting the privacy of past initiates and trying to avoid what he thought would be the ire of the Arch-Diocese.

I discovered in the next parish Father David's concerns were not shared by other local parishes as the confirmation director there offered me exhaustive lists of past initiates. I did not know if Father David's motivation extended beyond that which he stated, but his decision effectively ended the opportunity to complete the research at St. Benedict's. Patrick indicated he would keep working with me, but it seemed apparent that without access to past initiates I could not fulfill the research intent. I was forced to reevaluate the relationship with St. Benedict's over the next three weeks and determined I could not to gain the information needed. Thus, after three months of laying down the foundation, observing several classes, conducting interviews, and preparing further contacts, my research at St. Benedict's concluded. I thanked Patrick for his support, but said I would unfortunately need to look for another contact in a Catholic parish in the western suburbs of Minneapolis.

### **Contact #3: *St. Christopher's Catholic Church***

The experience at St. Benedict's caused me to reevaluate the research and I began contemplating a shift in the overall design. As I considered the possibilities, I contacted a third lead developed when I first returned to the United States and needed to purchase a vehicle for transport around the suburbs – a necessity in a city where there is no mass transportation system. As part of the purchasing process, I met Gloria James, a car saleswoman in a local dealership. During our informal discussions, I explained we had just returned from Scotland and I was in doctoral studies. She asked me some questions about the project and I explained my ideas related to studying values internalization among young Catholic initiates. We talked about Catholic matters for several more minutes and I told her I had attended a local Catholic school as a child at St. Hubert's. She seemed a bit amazed and

told me two of her sons had attended St. Hubert's as well. We determined the years of attendance and discovered we had all been there at the same time. I did not know them, but a strong "insider" connection was made between us.

We continued the conversation and I explained the scope of the interviews. She replied she would "love to see this kind of research in her parish." Her husband, Jim, was a deacon at St. Christopher's Catholic Church, and she insisted I phone him should I need his additional input for the project. I ended up purchasing a minivan through her and kept her name should I need it for later research. Thus, when the fieldwork at St. Benedict's ended, I contacted her and asked if I could speak to her husband about conducting research at St. Christopher's. She agreed and I called Jim, explained the parameters of the fieldwork, and described what I intended to accomplish. At this point I decided not to change the design since I was unsure if the initiate attrition and lack of reincorporation at St. Benedict's was an isolated sociological reality or part of a larger pattern. Jim did not mention any concerns related to initiate attrition and seemed happy to help in the research. He promptly arranged for me to speak with the confirmation director at St. Christopher's, Keith Hummell. I phoned Keith and we arranged for a time to meet to discuss the project in more detail.

During this meeting, Keith first gave me a tour of the church and school. It was a sizeable and obviously wealthy church filled with the technological details of foyer televisions, forty-foot ceilings, and a sprawling campus with paths, trees, and walkways. Worship services consisted of over a thousand adults, there were hundreds of children in the church-sponsored school bustling about, and the initiation program was quite large. Keith seemed quite proud of the scope of the program, and impressed upon me that several famous people from the Minneapolis area attended the church as well. He also took the time to show me the gadgets of the sanctuary such as the large worship screens and the scope of the cutting-edge architecture.



After the tour, we sat in his office and discussed the parameters of the fieldwork. Keith indicated he was too busy to be directly involved but said their church had a new computer system with the capability to cross-reference names and ages given whatever data was entered. Therefore, he could easily generate a list of those who completed initiation in the past ten years. He did not have ongoing contact with past initiates nor did he know where they were, but the technology of their computer system allowed for such a task. I reflected on the issues Father David had about sharing a list of names, but Keith did not seem to be concerned; in fact, I got the sense based on his mannerisms and intonations that he wanted me to be impressed with what St. Hubert's could accomplish on my behalf. When the interview concluded, I thanked him for the opportunity and awaited his list so I could begin to contact past initiates.

However, several weeks passed and I still had not heard from Keith nor secured a list of names of past initiates. He was slow to return phone calls, and sometimes didn't at all. When we finally made contact, he apologized and said he was quite busy running a window-washing business on the side, welcoming a new baby, and directing the initiation program. This delay extended my research into late February and I began to be quite concerned whether I would finish the research by the end of May as originally designed. After another several days, Keith phoned to inform me he had the lists of about 200 names. I was free to contact any of them for an interview, but there was no guarantee of finding them since he did not know if the contact information would prove accurate. He was not in regular contact with them.

Just before we made arrangements for me to retrieve the lists, however, my research at St. Christopher's came to a sudden end as Keith notified me the position of Confirmation Director was being reduced to a ½-time salaried position, and he was leaving St. Christopher's, effective immediately, as he could no longer provide for his family with the

reduced income. He needed to focus on his business instead. Moreover, Confirmation responsibility would be in flux for an extended period of time at St. Christopher's. He did not know who would be running the program or if and how it would continue in the upcoming year. He told me I could still retrieve the lists and use them as necessary. We made arrangements for him to drop them off at my home, but I never heard from him again. As I no longer had a contact person within the church as a resource to help conduct my interviews, I ended the research in this context as well. I was now nine months into the fieldwork and still had no meaningful contact with past initiates. I managed one more opportunity to work in a parish before the year came to an end, but this context would fail as well.

#### **Contact #4: *St. Dominic's Catholic Church***

My final opportunity resulted from interactions with one of my neighbors in the community in which we lived. The house into which we moved upon our arrival to the States was coincidentally across the street from the Faith Formation Director of the local parish, St. Dominic's Catholic Church. The Directors' name was Charles Rampart, and when we casually met the first time and introduced ourselves as neighbors, I mentioned my Ph.D. work, and he, like those in previous parishes, seemed quite interested. As I already had a parish in which to study, I did not need to conduct fieldwork with him at this time and we maintained contact as friendly neighbors.

After the failures of the previous three parishes, however, I contacted Charles and asked if he might be willing to provide a host church in which I could conduct a series of interviews. He again seemed quite amenable in regards to the project and invited me into the parish. We met for further planning conversations and, again, I had not changed the scope of the interviews – particularly because Keith had a list of 200 past initiates. This indicated to

me the research design was possible to achieve.<sup>315</sup> Based on our conversations, Charles and I developed the following letter of introduction (condensed and edited) to send to the possible initiate contacts. Charles then agreed to distribute the letter to the extent he was able.

***Figure Five: Letter to Initiate Families at St. Dominic's***

*March 22, 2007*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

We are writing to invite your participation in a research project. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to take part in a short interview process. This process can take place in person, over the phone, or through e-mail dialogue. The interviews will consist of a series of questions related to your own background, your views of religion and the church, and your thoughts on Confirmation in general. Face-to-face or phone interviews should take no more than 60-90 minutes, and e-mail interviews will consist of a series of questions to which you can respond in writing. All names and answers will be kept strictly confidential. Results of the study will be published in a dissertation and potentially in religious journals and books.

In the next 10-14 days, you will likely be contacted by either Peter Kapsner, or Charles Rampart. If you agree to participate, a date for a potential interview will be set. We greatly appreciate your consideration and look forward to contacting you soon.

Kind regards.

Peter Kapsner

Charles Rampart

Based on this letter, I was hopeful the research design would be completed. However, after the letter was finalized and approved, my contact with Charles went silent for nearly two months. I saw him across the street occasionally and waved an awkward “hello,” but I did not want to bother him by asking about the progress of the research. He made no effort at additional contact and there was no indication letters had been sent. Finally, I phoned him and asked for a meeting to discuss the progress of the fieldwork. It was now early summer and I determined, based on past precedence, the attempt to get started at St. Dominic's would

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<sup>315</sup> In retrospect, I cannot prove Keith had such a list as I never saw it.

likely fail. The research would have to take an entirely different direction if it was to be finished at all. After reflecting on what I had learned over the past year, I met with Charles in order to ask him what he thought of a proposed change of direction.

We discussed the situation in a local coffee shop on 17 August, 2007. We began with a discussion about our kids and family as Charles wanted to know what we were doing in terms of school for our children. I told him we enrolled our children in St. John's – a small Catholic elementary school recommended by him in past meetings. I saw his face "open up" when I informed him of this and he seemed to become unguarded in his conversation. He told me of his family and the personal difficulties related to an ailing mother-in-law and a mentally ill son. He also told me how busy he has been over the past few weeks because of this family illness as his wife was away for long stretches of time.

After this personal conversation, we discussed the research and the difficulty involved with contacting past initiates in the church. Charles, it seems, had never sent the letters. Based on this reality, I told Charles I was thinking of adding another year of research and changing it to focus on initiate attrition. Therefore, I wanted to contact Confirmation directors from around the city to determine if the rate of attrition around the city was as high as that which I had already experienced. From this, I proposed to gain enough data to establish a pattern of dissonance within the initiation process as initiates were "disappearing" across multiple parishes.

Upon relating this possible change of design, Charles breathed a visible sigh and then revealed a comment that summarized the experience of my first year of research. "Yes, (good idea). When I first looked at the list you gave me that you wanted to find thirty past initiates, *I knew there was no way in hell that would ever happen.*" This information finalized my decision. Charles had served as Faith Formation director for thirty years in the same parish and taken thousands of youth through confirmation, yet he still had such limited contact with

past initiates that he deemed it unrealistic to find even thirty of them for interviews. Thus, in this fourth and final parish I failed to find past initiates in meaningful numbers which then brought my first year of research to an end. Since I was unable to fulfill the original research intent, I decided a second year of research was necessary in order to document the pattern of attrition and dissonance in Catholic initiation in this context. None of the first year's work, however, was wasted, 'failure' usefully illuminating meaning and practice in a way quick 'success' would almost certainly not have done.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Research Process: Year Two**

#### *Pattern of Dissonance*

### **I. Introduction**

In the second year I shifted emphasis to finding and interviewing additional Confirmation directors of Catholic parishes to determine the pervasiveness of attrition. In addition, for effective triangulation, I needed to conduct corroborative research among relevant informants who were not Confirmation directors. Finally, gaining data from comparative samples required interviews and extensive research among Protestant churches that hold initiation ritual in this context as well as Catholic churches in rural settings and inner-city contexts. Overall, I conducted interviews with five more Confirmation directors, the faith formation director at a large Catholic high school, one of the lead bishops in the Offices of the Arch-Diocese, two priests in rural parishes, two directors in inner-city contexts, and seven initiation organizers in Protestant churches. In addition, I conducted a qualitative survey of sixty recent initiates at a local Catholic university.

This research process took the entire second year. As described in more detail below, interviews were quite difficult to secure given the scheduling demands of the people involved, and I often waited several weeks to gain one interview. However, I did manage to gather data from each of these interviews related to the first year of research in which I became aware of the high rate of initiation attrition, and the data supports the trend I had observed. This chapter provides a condensed look at the interviews with the five Confirmation directors, the director of faith formation at the local Catholic high school, and the local bishop as well as selected results of the surveys specifically related to the pattern of dissonance between institutional expectations of reincorporation vis-à-vis initiate attrition. This information provides a foundation for the following analytical chapters that outline

supporting data from supplemental interviews and comparative research in other Catholic and Protestant contexts, and offer possible explanations for why this attrition occurs.

## **II. The Research Process: *Interviewing Confirmation Directors***

Charles continued as my main resource after our meeting. Having worked as Faith Formation Director in his parish for such an extended time, he was well-known among most of the parishes throughout western Minneapolis. After we agreed interviewing initiation organizers as the best course of action, he invited me to attend a semi-annual gathering of local confirmation directors at the largest Catholic high school in this area.<sup>316</sup> The meeting was organized by James Larson, a theology teacher at the school. James also worked with students on matters of faith formation, and his goal was to open dialogue between the parishes and the school since there can be tension between the two organizations. The Catholic high school teaches religious education, and parents often state confirmation should just be handled at the high school so they do not have to bring their busy children to a weekly event in a church they rarely attend. The high school, however, sees its place as a temporary community for the youth and focuses on matters more suited to academic pursuits and not initiation. They do not want to usurp the role of the church in terms of lifelong reincorporation. More is said on this issue later in the chapter as I interviewed James specifically on this issue. At this point in the process, it is helpful to understand the context for the gathering. Since the high school students came from a variety of parishes, James sought to coordinate their efforts to teach and train the youth.

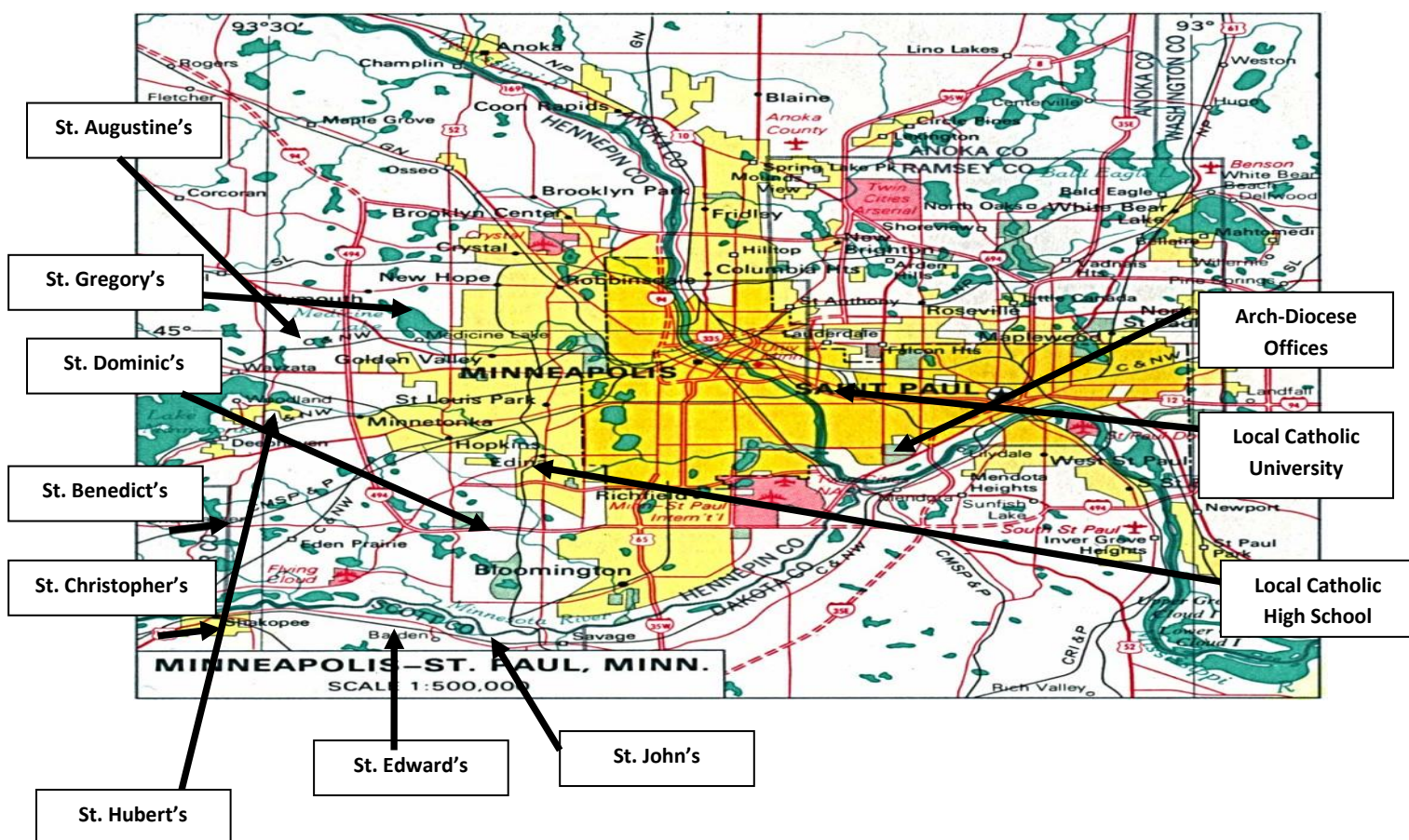
I was given a few minutes at the meeting to present my research project. Beth Gardson was present and during the meeting she was publicly positive about the research project and advocated on my behalf. A number of other initiation organizers nodded their

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<sup>316</sup> American high schools are the rough equivalent of British secondary schools. However, American high schools include youth through the age of 18 and attendance is mandatory until graduation at this age.

assent as initiation attrition was a significant issue in their parishes. Several invited me to contact them in the next few weeks in order to arrange a meeting time for interviews. Their constituency, as represented in the diagram below, came from most of the larger Catholic parishes on the western side of the Minneapolis area. I have also included an arrow to the Arch-Diocese, the local high school, local university as well as St. Benedict's and St. Christopher's from the first year. The graphic represents the demographic coverage I achieved to support claims of a pattern of attrition in this context.

**Geographic Map of Catholic Parishes in the Field Study**





As I began contacting the confirmation directors I found the interviews proved difficult to coordinate given the time demands on them. The average American workweek exceeds forty hours and often approaches sixty.<sup>317</sup> Pastors commonly work over fifty hours a week and sometimes as many as seventy hours in American churches.<sup>318</sup> I had been an associate pastor of Community Life in these same western suburbs in the early 2000's, part of a nine-person team overseeing the adult dimensions of ministry. The Executive Pastor supervising business and human resources made it clear he expected us to work a minimum of fifty hours each week. In addition, I carried a pager and was available for emergencies day-and-night. While I did not work in the Catholic parishes in which I interviewed, the churches were of similar size, class, and constituency as the Protestant church in which I had worked, and the demands expressed by confirmation directors employed full-time seemed similar to my experience. Therefore, knowing how busy they were, I did not want to risk losing contact with them and determined to move at their pace until it seemed clear they were ready to be interviewed. Despite the difficulty, I gained access to five additional parishes across this context, bringing the total number of Catholic churches participating in the research in this context to nine.

The remainder of this section details these interviews through verbatim excerpts. I completed full transcriptions of each interview from the digital recorder I used to record their words, but include only details relevant to the ritual process in each church as well as specific factors leading to initiate attrition. The interviews are redacted to emphasize a different dimension contributing to the attrition – including such phenomenon as individualized faith journey, competition for initiate attention, and the increased agency that comes when one

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<sup>317</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Table Four. Employed Persons Working and Time Spent Working on Days Worked by Full- and Part-Time Status and Sex, Jobholding Status, Educational Attainment, and Day of Week, 2009 Annual Averages," 2009, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.t04.htm>.

<sup>318</sup> Mark Kelly, "Pastors Work Hours Tallied in New Survey," *Baptist Press*, 6 January 2010, <http://www.sbc Baptist Press.org/bpnews.asp?id=31993>.

receives their driver's license. While each context faced the challenges of these factors to some degree, I intentionally highlighted a singular factor in each interview (to the exclusion of others) in order to provide greater clarity. When combined, however, the various sociological realities create a synthesized picture of the challenges of initiation in a "high-agency," *Gesellschaft* context. This fact is discussed in a later chapter in which the data is analyzed; at this point I am simply establishing a pattern of attrition by virtue of interviews across a number of parishes. This data supports the central claim of the dissertation.

**Church Contact #1: St. Benedict's Catholic Church**  
*Sociological Issue: Driver's License and Confirmation*

The first section of this chapter described the research process at St. Benedict's and how the observations and interviews there provided the first data for initiate attrition. The following is a slightly more extended excerpt of my interview with Patrick Collins. I included this interview first in this section to provide background to the age group in which confirmation is commonly practiced in the western suburbs of Minneapolis, and why it is administered between fifteen and sixteen years of age. Youth can apply for their driver's license at age sixteen in the United States which often brings greater empowerment – particularly in affluent contexts where individually possessing an automobile is a common expectation among the youth.<sup>319</sup> Therefore, churches often conduct initiation before initiates have their driver's license since they have less freedom at this point. This fact became evident within the hour-long interview I conducted with Patrick in the first year of the study. The interview excerpt continues from his joke on page 143 about confirmation being the best way to get rid of a plague of squirrels.

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<sup>319</sup> Larry Edsall, "Choosing Your Teen's First Car," *MSN Autos*, <http://editorial.autos.msn.com/article.aspx?cp-documentid=434845&vv=800>.

### ***Interview Excerpt with Patrick Collins***

PK: Wow. That's a good joke.

PC: Yeah, but unfortunately it's more true than you want to say. We're trying to get away from it. To associate with any kind of graduation is a negative. We do have some direction from the arch-diocese and from Rome that it should be in the teenage years. I've talked to some priests who say it should be used as marriage prep. Saying that it goes back to biblical times, and if you want to look at it more as a sacrament thing, it was more as an adult. And baptism was all adult. So now we're all concerned with the sequence and all that, but we won't touch infant baptism. So we're cowards or whatever you want. But that's pretty well ingrained.

And then we get to where we are now where we're trying to do ongoing conversion. ***The pragmatic part is unfortunately it's the driver's license.*** What happens is that when kids turn 16 they get mobile. Then a lot of them have to get jobs to support the fact that they have a driver's license and once we get past 16, we get a significant drop off rate as far as who is getting confirmed. It's unfortunate but it's a reality.

PK: So if I'm hearing you right, you want to get to them before they get mobile and get jobs then they disappear and their social life is increasing?

PC: Right at that period. We can get that ½ of 16-year-old year....we can trickle into the 17<sup>th</sup> year, but the more you trickle, the more you lose them.

### ***Comments***

The important data derived from this interview relates to how the driver's license affects agency, opportunity structure, and the age of confirmation. Patrick stated they increasingly lose their confirmands if they don't confirm before seventeen because the youth are so busy with added job responsibilities, athletics, and social activities that come with increased freedom. Each of the remaining churches in which I conducted interviews, with the exception of one, held their confirmation program just prior to the age of applying for a driver's license. The exception held it between ages sixteen and eighteen and had the smallest enrollment.

## **Church Contact #2: St. Augustine's Catholic Church**

*Sociological Issue: Individualization and Initiation*

Though she turned down my initial research proposal, I maintained contact with Beth and, as stated above, she spoke for my research in other churches in the Minneapolis area. In addition, Beth agreed to participate in a full interview for the project during this second year. The interview describes the ritual process at St. Augustine as well as the challenges for post-initiation reincorporation. While the main challenge involves the church competing for initiate attention with other social spheres such as athletics, schoolwork, and job, an additional subtle dynamic emerged in the interview related to individualized notions of faith enmeshed in the community ritual of initiation. While seemingly unrelated, social competition and individualization are actually two expressions of the same societal dynamic. In their social worlds in this context, the youth are highly empowered to choose among friends, athletics, job, hobbies, etc. on an individualistic basis. This reality then demonstrates a possible syncretism between church and culture where individual relationship and personal experience with Jesus is commonly emphasized, and personal choice in how to “follow God” is highly regarded and protected. The church then attempts to create a more trendy and compelling context than that of surrounding society in order to “draw the youth in.” This competition and individualization seen in the interview excerpt with Beth below assumes a lack of effective reincorporation and demonstrates the dissonance in what is historically understood as initiation. Comments are embedded within the interview to highlight these points.

### ***Interview with Beth Gardson***

#### ***A. Ritual Process***

PK: You have 175 confirmands in the program right now and it is two years long. What are you doing in the first year?

BG: In the first year what we are trying to do is look at who Jesus is. And so they have a course in the first semester in which they see Jesus' message and mission. They meet

in small groups and start to connect a little more to the parish in their way...So you're making a connection with other kids your age or catechists or other catechists or a group of parents who are looking at who is Jesus. There's a book we use that has 5 lessons...very experiential...the kids never get a book...

PK: You do a passion play the second half of the year for all confirmands?

BG: The kids think is about the play; it's really not. It's about what they learn. They also do a retreat on Jesus and one service experience in their small group.

### *Comments*

The new confirmands meet weekly and there were no excused absences in order that athletics or other commitments do not take precedence over the meetings. For those who do not participate in the passion play, there is a study comprised of reading the Bible and learning about the history of the Catholic Church. Most of the children opt for an individual role in the play with the resulting implication that few confirmands learn the meta-narrative of the church with its communal myths and rituals. In addition, the overall curriculum for both the first and second half of the year is individually designed to encourage the youth to follow Jesus in an experiential way. While the vertical dimension of relational faith is emphasized, there is little by way of emphasizing horizontal relationships within the community.

BG: Then we get to the confirmation year in their second year. We have a number of meetings; they meet in...two times in leaders' homes. One of the reasons why we have them in the leader's homes is have 16-20 groups in the fellowship hall to talk is awful. And so moving them out to the homes for one time, that moves it forward about two months of interaction with one another just being able to talk to each other.

What I ask of the leaders is hospitality...love the Lord, loving kids, other considerations....I think we are working a lot more on the service piece and more on the sponsor piece. That has been the weaker part of what we've been doing. Part of it is for us to connect with who is being the sponsor and what they are doing and how they are doing it.

PK: How do kids mostly get their sponsors?

BG: As far as that goes, it's very hard for the kids to pick someone who is in their life that is still Catholic, is someone they want to talk to. So it's not only a requirement but it is really essential to what we are doing so we are putting more effort into it.

## ***Comments***

Community service is the first component of the second year of confirmation as the youth work through eight different service experiences ranging from serving as counselors at Vacation Bible School to prayer ministries to feeding the hungry. Service ideas are distributed individually to the students and they are not expected to work with other confirmands on their projects. They are free to choose the service opportunities that interest them most. The second component revolves around choosing a sponsor who will present them at their confirmation. Sponsors do not have to be part of the local parish, nor do they have to be Catholic – though if they are not Catholic, the Church asks for a parent to be part of the process as well. The point of the sponsor is to serve as an individual mentor to the confirmand. The church is able to help find a sponsor if the children do not know a suitable Catholic sponsor in their own lives. The final component involved meeting bi-monthly at the church with a leader and a few other members of the initiation class.

### ***B. Reincorporation and Dissonance***

- PK: I find that the kids I've worked with in the past....some have inherent interest, some none and a mob of middle. What is your group like?
- BG: Ours is the same. I think that's one of the biggest things about confirmation is if you have a small group of kids who have a leader that really cares about them, they start to care for each other. That draws them in a lot more than if they are a number in the classroom no matter what size where they have no commitment to each other.
- PK: What are some of the challenges you have at St Benedict's?
- BG: After they are confirmed one of the things we did this year more intentionally was what are you going to commit to from now on as this is the last class. Some of it is to pray, to go to church, to be involved in life team.
- PK: What are the challenges in the process in it now and afterwards.
- BG: The unique challenges are that people are committed to sports. Sports are the god. Every program in the church is fighting against what is the primary commitment; my kids' dance, gymnastics, soccer, hockey lesson....my kids' hockey games. That's the primary thing that's the biggest conflict.

PK: The real power of the church is that people are a part of it because they feel like they have to.....do you run into that?

BG: I think it's really evident in that I have 100 coming in 6th-8<sup>th</sup> grade and 200 kids coming in 9th-10<sup>th</sup> grades for confirmation that is required. And then it falls back...definitely. People who are sending their kids to confirmation that are not going to church at all...not going regularly...talked to a group of 7th grade kids last year and we were talking about family traditions and we started talking about Christmas and two of the girls hadn't been there for Christmas. Two of them had basketball tournaments and they couldn't go. And it's the whole mindset that it's so hard to make people aware of the world outside them.

### *Comments*

The initiates often do not know their leader before starting the process, nor will they have prior relationships with most other initiates in their group. They are coming from disparate backgrounds and locations. Beth speaks of the importance of making relational connections during this time to encourage continuing participating in the church after the initiation process. However, because of sports, other commitments, and the ability to drive during their 10<sup>th</sup> grade year, the “participation bulge” that happens during catechism drops after Confirmation ends. There is, as indicated earlier in this chapter, no formal means of following-up with the initiates or determining what kind of church relationships in which they are engaged, if at all.

In summary, then, the final sacrament of initiation occurs among fifteen and sixteen year olds before they are able to drive. The first year is spent first getting to know and experiencing Jesus as part of one's individual faith journey, and then participating in the passion play for most confirmands. There are seventeen total meetings over the course of forty weeks and attendance is mandatory to mitigate against skipping initiation for other social commitments – primarily athletics. Beth speaks of how busy the initiates are in other, disconnected social spheres. The second year comprises individualized service projects, small-group meetings, and interacting with a sponsor on a mentoring basis. At the end of the year, initiates are presented in front of the church at a “Sending Off” service to encourage

them in their faith journey. Initiates know few others at their local parish, tend to leave after initiation, and are trained to continue following Jesus in their own way. This social syncretism seems a primary contributor to initiation attrition as the church is unable to effectively compete with society for the attention of the youth. While this dynamic is also pertinent in the interviews described below, it is taken for granted in order to present other factors related to initiate attrition.

### **Church Contact #3: St. Edward's Catholic Church**

*Sociological Issue: Confirmation Director does not live in Parish*

St. Edward's was the largest church and parish among those I interviewed, and the situation of the confirmation director, Chris Nelson, the most unique. Chris lived over twenty miles from St. Edward's and attended a different Catholic Church. She quit her job in this church as she did not like the overlapping relationship of director and attendee. However, she made friends with a priest that works in the church and when he left to lead St. Edward's, she took the job of confirmation director when he asked her if she could help. Her role was part-time despite the fact the church was wealthy and had over 2,000 attendees and 100 youth in the program. The ritual process and her unique sociological context are outlined in the interview excerpts and comments below with an emphasis on the fact that the confirmation director did not live in the parish of the initiation.

#### **A. Ritual Process**

CN: I actually belong to St. Francis. But I had a hard time being on staff there too. But I've been a parishioner for 25 years there. As a staff member it's really hard working in that environment....work here it's really good to be on staff here. But it's hard working in formation with the people in the parish here than there.

PK: How did you get here?

CN: I had Father Kennedy who at been at Epiphany for four years before his move here and I just called him out of the blue to wish Happy birthday and jokingly asked him if we had any job openings and he did....so I'm here.

PK: How big are your classes?



CN: We confirming in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and had 120 students. We are switching to 10<sup>th</sup> grade now. We have 280 between the two grades now. We're just doing a double-whammy this year. Next year it will just be 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

PK: At the meeting I attended where we met, I was quite interested to see how different the process is in each of the parishes.

CN: It depends on how you define your confirmation too. We know that people show up for sacraments, so if you call it a sacrament program people come. We definitely have a bulge in enrollment in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade year, where our 9<sup>th</sup> graders are a little bit lower, and our 12<sup>th</sup> graders are practically non-existent. I see that in my parish, too.

PK: What do you do for confirmation?

CN: We have seven sessions, basically about once a month. It's a different curriculum than our faith formation curriculum. We are modeling ourselves on RCIA and we ask the sponsors to come and teach sessions with the students or candidates and there is always time for interactions for sponsor and candidates to ask questions as we are doing these broad sessions.

I think this one is kind of important and challenging. I also find that each family that is connected that may have few people they know...and I see it in confirmation. I was a little startled that 60% of the kids use their parents as sponsors.

The church says that parents should not be sponsors, so we've stopped short of absolutely no, but I didn't realize last year that this would be the case – so these year I've emphasized that this should not be the case....parents as sponsors, just like you shouldn't be the godparent at confirmation.

### ***Comments***

Because Chris worked in another parish, she was challenged by getting to know the initiates going through the process. She also limited the confirmation experience to seven meetings over a nine month period in which the initiates met in a large group to learn the basics of the Catholic faith in terms of history and theology. Chris said she had a lot of complaints from parents that meeting once a month was too much for their busy schedules. In addition, most of the initiates and parents were not connected with others in the church and the initiates had a difficult time finding sponsors; thus leading to a different kind of dissonance in which they were forced to use parents when necessary despite this running contrary to institutional guidelines.

### ***B. Reincorporation and Dissonance***

PK: My experience in other churches is that most initiates leave after the sacramental process. I was in a Protestant church where they held a Senior “send-off” service designed for fifty graduating seniors and only two showed up.

CN: Oh yeah. We had 8 seniors signed up for FF, and we confirmed 120 last year. Some go to Catholic school so they aren’t going to be coming here, but not 112. They look at it as totally optional and they are not going to do it. It is optional, but I would like to see them occasionally make an appearance. But it adds stress to their life and they can’t make it this week because of a big homework project and I just say okay, I hope to see you next week.

PK: How do you interpret what happens....why they all leave?

CN: I guess I look at this as an opportunity to get this bulge of kids at this age at this level for this purpose. I know they are coming because it is so important to their parents and their parents are like, phew, get this done. You hear a little about....so there are...for the parents even they are all doing this to finish this last push and one last commitment they have to have and one last thing to deal with at home. So they do make this big effort. A lot of kids are just doing that which is why we never see them back again. I think of it as an opportunity at least. God has his hands on their life. At some point he’ll give them that nudge....for some of them maybe not.

And I hope that even I have made some connection with these kids. That’s a big goal for me that I would have some idea of who they are so when we get to ceremony at the end of the process and we get to that confirmation mass. I would know who they are and be proud to see them receiving the sacrament.

### ***Comments***

The church holds a “send-off” service for students when they graduate from high school, and despite the possibility of over one hundred confirmands attending, only eight returned to this service. The notion of a “send-off” service also implies the church does not expect them to continue attending in their local parish. In addition, the fact that the confirmation director does not live in the parish indicates the initiates are not expected to do so either. While it might be assumed they will attend mass in the city of their university or employment, statistics show an increasing lack of attendance among current American Catholics. This will be detailed more fully next chapter with an analysis of the macro-rates of

mass attendance, but at this point it is enough to note that St. Edward's also experienced this pattern of initiate attrition at the local level.

***Church Contact #4: St. Gregory's Catholic Church***

*Sociological Issue: Evangelism, Personal Commitment and Attrition*

I phoned Bill Sanford of St. Gregory's Catholic Church without prior contact, and he agreed to meet with me. St. Gregory's is a smaller parish than that of the previous two and I had no background knowledge of the parish upon conducting the interview. During the interview, I discovered Bill was a former Protestant who converted into the Catholic Church as an adult. Partially due to his background as an "evangelical", he saw a dimension of his job and mission as "saving" those who had not made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ – an "altar-call" notion popular among some patterns of American Protestantism such as Baptist and Evangelical Free. These traditions tend to emphasize a memorable moment of personal conversion to accept Jesus Christ as Savior much like that which occurs at a Billy Graham Crusade. In such patterns, notions of discipleship follow the "saving" experience and those "saved" are expected to participate in the church. Therefore, Bill sought to "save" the youth by encouraging them to have a relationship with Jesus, and also created a robust program for youth pre-initiation and post-initiation. His goal was to see priorities shift among the initiates so that church would become part of their circle of influence. Yet, as we shall see, initiate attrition was still prominent in his parish.

***A. Ritual Process***

PK: When do you do Confirmation here and what is the process?

BS: Confirmation in our parish is on Sunday evenings and they meet in small-group format. We meet approximately twice a month is what it averages out to be....sometimes it's once a month depending on the calendar. We do not meet in the summer time so it's just during the school year. On top of that, we have two retreats, one in each grade.

I would even say that one of the goals that we try to do here...one of the things we try to implement is that we have a strong program for 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade in junior high. That's not ReligiousEd-based but social, spiritual, prayer-centered.

Really, what we are trying to do there is build relationships with the kids before they get into 9<sup>th</sup> grade so it's not like, "Here they are and drop them at the door.

'Sacrament' me." Get this over with. Give me the bare minimums....all that kind of stuff you traditionally get. So there's an established relationship....they know the majority of the kids that are coming into Confirmation. They see me at retreats, at Friday Night Live....extreme day camp all these different things that we do.

PK: That's interesting. So they get confirmed at the end of their 10<sup>th</sup> grade year. Pretty standard....11<sup>th</sup> grade maybe. So you have those two intervening years – their last two high school years – and that has been the most challenging time to try to reach them. The retention rate is anywhere from .05% to 25%. Is that where some of the challenges for you come in? What happens in those 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade years?

BS: I started a new thing this year called ALTAS which is Latin for higher or deeper or something. Essentially it is a discipleship Bible study slash whatever subject kids want to talk about for juniors and senior and college age kids that are around. And we've got about 15 kids that voluntarily are participating. There are no requirements or anything....they just want to do...they pick the topics.

We are trying to reach them and provide things so they feel like it's their own unique program. So we do try to provide things that are outside of the sacramental viewpoint. Do you win everybody with that? No. I don't know what our numbers are. We probably have 75% of the people that just go through the sacramental system and we're probably getting direct contact with maybe 25%.

So again. It's building relationships. It's getting creative in what you are offering. It's being a squeaky wheel. I tell my associate sometimes you're going to feel like a squeaky wheel, but you have to make noise because people are flooded with invitations.

### ***Comments***

Bill seemed optimistic and upbeat about his job which resulted in him emphasizing the positive dimensions and the success of the program; perhaps unduly so given his body language and emphasis. This led to my second question related to high rates of attrition in order to determine if Bill could refute that pattern in his own parish – which would then give me some disconfirming evidence – or if he would be more comfortable being transparent if he knew he wasn't alone in such challenges. I discovered his answer to be somewhere in-

between. He began to honestly talk about his challenges, but then maintained a 25% reincorporation rate. Upon analyzing this, though, his figures contradicted other statements in which he teaches 100 confirmands in a given year, yet has fifteen as part of his post-initiation discipleship meetings comprising two years of past initiates – or nearly 200 in total. This would suggest a 7.5% retention rate.

In addition, it is important to note here that Bill talked about individualizing the program so initiates could design their own path to a certain extent. As we shall see in the final chapter, this individualization suggests an evolution towards a more personalized model of sacramental initiation. The church is using the sacraments to meet the needs the needs of the initiate rather than emphasizing the incorporation dimension.

### ***B. Reincorporation and Dissonance***

BS: As far as just the challenges, I'm sure I'm going to say a lot of the same things you've encountered from talking to the people who are doing this. I guess, the first thing I would say is that you are dealing with the culture in general that is very busy. Very committed to sports programs, very committed to education, very committed to a lot of things. Getting into high school and of course conflicting with the religious commitments they feel they also must make.

PK: With the kids that do stick around. You say you have contact with 25-30% of them. Do you notice any patterns among their family in terms of....are their families typically more actively involved or more participatory in the church. What are some of the reasons you can identify as to why they stick as opposed to some of the other ones.

BS: In some cases there is a family expectation that even though you are a junior or senior, the faith matters. There are some kids that aren't necessarily involved all the time but they will come around for those bigger high school events.

***I would say, if I to pick one thing, I would say if we can reach them in junior high and they have some kind of conversion experience,*** which I don't know if you've heard that....there's no question that if I had to look through these pictures and asked them to talk about why they are here....all of them would say when in 7<sup>th</sup> grade I thought Mass was boring and I didn't think God was real and I had a break-through.

All of a sudden Jesus became a reality to me and the experience of God's love (are we recording this?) I don't think it's my Protestant background. I believe that it is actually Catholic theology. I've studied the catechism thoroughly on this.

Actually the catechism talks about when you baptize a child, there's a responsibility in the community later to evangelize and catechize that child. We're really good with catechesis and the teaching tools. We aren't so comfortable with the other....well that's something that the Baptists or Free churches do....so we're not really sure where we're at with this.

But I think we have to as Catholics, we're not denying baptism or the sacraments, but what we're saying is, in a sense the Catholic idea is that we may make a daily decision for Christ. It wouldn't be a once for all, you know.

PK: Yeah, it's not like a magic wand thing, but there needs to be a decision.

BS: Absolutely, I tell kids all the time and one of my lines in YM is every time you go to mass you have an alter call. You go to the altar and receive the Eucharist and say amen so you are in a sense you are agreeing, making a decision for God. It really is your Catholic moment. So I try to make a strong connection with the sacraments and inner conversion. If you're trying to catechize, but they haven't been evangelized...

### *Comments*

Bill consistently made distinctions between catechism and conversion. His primary concern related to the fact the Church was trying to initiate its youth even though, in his mind, they were not followers of Jesus. They were being initiated because they were born into the church and baptized as infants. They often attended Confirmation because their parents or grandparents expected it of them. Bill also suggested the level of commitments and other opportunities for his youth represented a competitive challenge for their time and attention; therefore, without a personal conversion, the youth leave the church when they complete the initiation process since their participation was based on external motivation. Bill emphasized conversion though he did not seem to have the full unity or support of his colleagues on this matter. Whether or not his perceptions of the situation reflected reality, his basic point has explanatory power as related to initiate attrition. If the youth are going through the process without some form of intrinsic, internal motivation, they are unlikely to continue beyond that which is expected of them by external forces such as parents, grandparents, or friends in their lives. Thus, personal conversion seems to be another factor in the high rate of initiate attrition.

### **Church Contact #5: St. Hubert's Catholic Church**

*Sociological Issue: Lack of Ritual Awareness and Faith Integration in Initiation*

St. Hubert's was a smaller church of approximately 500 parishioners in a wealthy lake community in western Minneapolis. Initiates attending St. Hubert's confirmation program had to be at least sixteen years old, but could come as late as eighteen years – after which they would have to go through the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). The sacramental process consisted of three parts over one year of preparation. Firstly, the students met monthly at the church to discuss relevant theological and historical topics. Secondly, initiates performed twenty-five hours of community service and document their process. Finally, the youth were expected to participate in some form of ongoing faith formation, whether at school or in the church.

I conducted two separate interviews at St. Hubert's with Terry Larson, the Confirmation director, and she indicated a distinct lack of awareness among the youth as related to a "ritual way of life," with faith and social life seen as separate. This lack of faith integration in disparate social spheres had been the impetus for my original thesis design on values internalization among past initiates, and Terry corroborated this intuition in highlighting the waning influence of faith ritual on the initiate's daily life. This fact also provided explanatory power for the changed line of inquiry related to initiation attrition.

PK: It seems there is variance among churches in terms of programs/activities suggested for youth who have completed Confirmation, but all churches seem to experience a significant drop in attendance. What does St. Hubert's suggest for post-Confirmation youth and what percentage of the youth are regularly present?

TL: St. Hubert's previously offered a Bible Study for senior high youth who were interested in further Catechesis. Three years ago, that program was dropped due to almost minimal participation. It's something I would personally like to see brought back as we re-engage our youth. Currently, we are offering a High School Council, open to all high schoolers, kind of like a peer ministry program. We meet after faith formation classes to share our faith, talk about issues, etc. This group is also still small, though I do think there is potential for growth.

- PK: Of the youth that continue to come to church, can you tell me (on a general basis) about the participation of their family in church?
- TL: Kids who come to our programs either after Confirmation or programs in addition to Faith Formation, come from families who regularly attend church (normally weekly), and their families are involved in ministries - lectoring, hospitality, etc.
- PK: One Confirmation director said to me that he hears from parents to their children, "Well AT LEAST you're going to go through Confirmation." In your opinion, how might the emphasis on Sacrament contribute to the phenomenon that there is a major spike in youth attendance during Confirmation?
- TL: The Catholic Church is a sacramental church. The sacraments are pivotal moments in our faith life - times we gather ritually as a community to celebrate and praise God. I think this is one of the reasons that we still see parents pushing the sacraments despite their own minimal involvement with the church. Yet, I do have concerns about how long this trend will continue. We do see a small spike during Confirmation, but not significant. More often, I see a majority that goes through the programs leading up to and including Confirmation. For kids who aren't connected ritually to their faith, they don't have the ritual worship mindset to necessarily appreciate the sacraments. Learning to worship in a way that is ritual - repeated, communal, private, silent, joyous - takes practice, and it's sad that this aspect is so frequently lost. Thus, I wonder if this generation will continue to apply pressure on their kids for the sacraments or if they will encourage overall Catechesis.

### *Comments*

Terry suggested parents were not involved in the church on an ongoing basis, do not have a robust theological understanding of the role of the sacraments in a ritual way of life, nor do they practice a "faith-integrated" lifestyle. As a result, she questioned the future of the sacraments in this context and wondered if initiation would prove an unsustainable practice longer term as each generation places increasingly less emphasis on the ritual. Terry indicated she is seeing attrition, not just post-initiation, but as part of a macro-sociological trend in which parents and families are increasingly absent from the weekly activities of the church. Those remaining more involved are typically volunteering in the church in some capacity, but this number is a small percentage of possible active attendees.





Image of confirmands at their celebration service at St. Hubert's. Most of them, according to Terry, do not practice a ritual way of life in which the sacraments then have meaningful context.

#### **Church Contact #6: St. Ignatius Catholic Church**

##### *Sociological Issue: Dissonance Between Organizer and Institution in Initiation*

My experience in the first year at St. Benedict's in which there was a row between Patrick Collins and the lead priest allowed me to observe possible tension in the initiation process at the level of initiation organizer. The organizers are often "caught in the middle" between the expectations of the initiate constituency and that of the institution. On one side are the initiates and families who commonly complain about the length of the program, do not like its content, are often apathetic to the process, and then commonly leave the church when the process is over. On the other side is the institution which is seeking results in terms of theological and functional consistency with papal decrees, a vibrant initiation program leading on to permanent community in church, and a church relevant enough to keep the youth engaged. Thus the organizer may be trapped between acceding to the demands of the initiates and families in order to keep them coming and not compromising the demands of the institution. The tension of this balance can lead to disgruntled initiation organizers which, in turn, may affect the overall ethos and "success" of the initiation. Patrick Collins was clearly

disgruntled with the church, Bill Sanford demonstrated flashes of tension as he spoke of evangelism, and Mary Stockbridge, the last of the initiation organizers I interviewed, was clearly not happy with the methods of her particular parish.

My interview with Mary was the longest – encompassing nearly two hours and covering a wide range of sacramental history, her perceptions of the current sociological state of initiation in this context, and her troubles with the way the church proceeds in initiation. In many ways, her words coalesce the information gathered previously. She was middle-aged, and I found her to be engaging, opinionated, and apparently open as she responded to the interview questions. Her responses provided a brief window into the state of dissonance and tension in her setting, and upon reflection, this tension is yet another probable factor in the rate of attrition as youth may avoid a setting of tension and disunity. The excerpts of her interview are more extended than that of the previous six.

MS: One of the things I have going for me is I don't look ordinary. People who may not remember anything else about me – my face – will tag me more easily. So I have some plusses. And I also do it in an attempt to defocus some of the clericalism that is problematic in Roman Catholic ministry.

Because you've got all these people doing ministry like myself, and then you've got the ordained. And let me tell you, it is a huge kick-up in the church right now to figure out just what that distinction is. It's a caste system of ministry in the Roman Catholic church that I don't like to reinforce by (a nametag)...a CEO doesn't wear one, a subordinate does. That's not how it should be in a faith community..... I get myself in all sorts of trouble: sorry, this is a long way from Confirmation!

Well the primary problem I see with the configuration of Confirmation as a ritual event in the life of a young Roman Catholic is that we have backed ourselves into a corner sociologically. You're familiar with the distinction that for Catholics the seven sacraments are historically rooted in something Jesus said or did? The rooting may be a little tangential in Confirmation – promise of the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost event...leading to Jesus? So the Catholic Church has historically found it psychologically necessary to ground all its acts in something traceable to apostolic origins. And so for Catholics, Confirmation is a sacrament of the church. That means that we feel less free to utilize it for developmental purposes. And theologically there

is no room whatsoever for doing that. Because in a further respect we are bogged down is that Confirmation is taught in Catholic theology as a sacrament of initiation.

### ***Comments***

Mary seemed to view current practices in her church through the lens of a historical perspective of initiation. As we shall see in the next section, she consistently connected what she does now with what has happened in the past. This was unique among the confirmation directors I interviewed and though she was frustrated by some of her relationships in the setting, she seemed less bothered that is dissonance because it is part of a long-standing pattern. The next section is a bit longer, but captures many of the dimensions of this pattern in history.

MS: Anciently, Confirmation was just an anointing connected with baptism. It emerged as a distinct sacrament purely as an accident of the church becoming too large (bishops couldn't get out everywhere.) And the Eastern Church solved that in a very different way. The way the East coped with it (and still does) is that children are chrismated at baptism, with oil blessed by the bishop....that was how they preserved the sense of the bishop at initiation. But chrismation and communion both happen at baptism. The baby is given a tiny little bit of bread and wine to gum down.

Anciently, you were initiated in one fell swoop. You were taken down to the river with the whole family and then you were clothed and brought into the community to celebrate the Eucharist. And that's still what we do with initiation of adults in the Easter Vigil. After Vatican II we arrived at that practice. (RCIA)

You have that ancient practice, then you have that deformation of practice owing to the unavailability of the bishop. The West dealt with it by reserving that anointing for whenever you ran into a bishop – which meant that the bishop would come through town and confirm the baby who had been baptized last week, the ten year old who had never seen a bishop in their entire lives, and the grown up who have never seen a bishop in their entire life.

As the centuries went on and people (also) became alienated from liturgy. Whereas liturgy had started out being table prayer in a home, once Constantine gave us basilicas we started celebrating in churches. The other problem is that whereas in early Christendom, Greek was lingua franca in Eastern Mediterranean and Latin was the lingua franca in Western Mediterranean, so it made sense to pray in those languages. Western Europe persisted in praying in Latin long after it ceased being the common language, but nobody spoke it, not even the priests.

So you have this gigantic alienation and mass becomes this holy mystery enacted a football field away by the holy people in a language you don't understand and couldn't hear anyway because there is no PA system. And you're praying beads and looking at stories on stained glass windows because you are an illiterate European peasant. People stopped going to communion because it was this very holy thing being done by very holy people at the end of church. Catherine of Sienna writes about a Sunday in which she was just entranced because the priest decided to give her communion. There was no sense of the people participating. That's when we got into the business of ringing the bells and elevating the host.

### *Comments*

At this point Mary is going to transition to more current day practices by connecting that which has taken place with some of the more recent evolutions in initiation practice – specifically that of the Eucharist.

MS: You know at table, you don't normally wave your food over your head. But in those medieval days it was the only way the peasants would have a clue when they got to that point in the action. They knew to adore because that was as close as they got to the sacrament.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pope Pius required Catholic Christians to receive communion once a year. Now you don't have to require people to do something unless they aren't already doing that much. We went to mass and adored the Eucharist, but we didn't receive it. So if you aren't giving communion to grown-ups, you certainly are not giving it to babies. So you had baptism as an isolated sacrament of initiation and you had communion as a rare event in your life, and you had confirmation when you got close to a bishop. So they are utterly fractured but we still had the theology that these are the sacraments of initiation.

This is the real clunker – Eucharist is the summit of initiation. There is no fuller union with the body of Christ. Well then you've got a problem, because what are you doing when you are doing a sacrament of initiation 4-6 years after the kids come to the table! Because in the Catholic tradition, you have kids coming to the table, because Pius X said to get kids to communion as soon as they can get their heads around the idea that it is not a cookie snack. Some would argue the age of reason should be 28.

So you've got RC practice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century being infant baptism, communion at the age of reason: Pius X wasn't particularly concerned about confirmation so he left it kind of floating up there in the age of early adults. But nobody told us this was new stuff. Because in the 1950's you were taught that the church has ever been thus. When the Vatican II came around the church looked at everything. There is something to have the initiation sacraments in an order that reflect their priority. If the Eucharist is the summit of the sacraments, then we better darn well get the rest of the

initiation.....so they started talking about a restored order confirmation for people who were baptized as babies but would be confirmed at the same time as the reception of the Eucharist.

### *Comments*

After some further comments, Mary transitions from this history to a detailed look at the practice of confirmation in her context. In her account, she describes well the kind of dissonance occurring in many parishes in the United States where confirmation is coming after the Eucharist. In this, we also see some of the current concerns related to attrition and how it is hard to see confirmation as a rite of initiation into the church when it is taking place after the Eucharist. It, in her opinion, becomes anti-climactic.

MS: With restored order people realized we created a sociological vacuum. There was no question of pushing first communion up to high school age. You were supposed to give Communion as soon as they were old enough. You don't wait until your kid is able to understand nutrition theory before you give them meals.

But people started worrying because we no longer had a sacrament for adolescents. So we had this problem that our theology almost dissed Eucharist as a sacrament, but if we stuck Confirmation back with second-third graders then we had nothing to use as an attachment – a ritual attachment – for high school kids.

PK: Nothing between the Eucharist and marriage?

MS: I have been arguing for years that we have to put Confirmation where it belongs. But if you are part of a church that teaches you that nothing ever changes, you are in real trouble when you try to change things.

PK: When I was talking with older gentlemen in another church, it was very disconcerting for them....they didn't know anything had changed.

MS: We really robbed people by not equipping them to think. By just lockstepping them through. Rome knows best and it was ever thus. The whole process became a political push pull. Progressives did restored order confirmation; conservatives did adolescent confirmation. Our current archbishop is a conservative and when he came aboard he didn't force parishes to cease doing restored order.

Fascinatingly, at the same time the archbishop started this drive to get rid of restored order confirmation, the bishop of North Dakota (neighboring state) mandated restored-order for his entire diocese. And he is in the same general region... In the wake of Benedict's ascendancy, Rome has looked into a commission to look into our theology to see if it in fact demands restored-order.

PK: So there could be seismic shift....

MS: It's going to be more than a few years...and this may all fizzle because enough people may yell prudence. I don't know where Benedict is on this agenda. The flat out reality is that there is no coherent Catholic theology for Confirmation as things now stand because you can't teach it as a sacrament of initiation after Eucharist without distorting the Eucharist. So we teach it muddledly as some sort of sacrament of commitment.

When I have to teach adolescent Confirmation, because I occasionally have to, I level with the kids. There is no tougher audience than a room full of 14-year olds. And I say to them, look, here is the muddled state of things. Here is how we got here. This is at this point more of a sacrament for you hanging in there with the church as it sorts this out. Can you take this stance into saying that this church is worth hanging in here with this and that, yes, the church is confused.

PK: Would you argue that from a church perspective that the reason for adolescent confirmation is that we want to keep the kids around in active in the church?

MS: The thing is, it doesn't really work as an adolescent rite of passage because there's no really good way to teach it as such. It is bankrupt theologically. Yes you are receiving the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit was not standing out in the hallway during baptism. And kids understand communion .....when I was teaching confirmation I had some parents say to me they didn't want to put their kids in confirmation because she understands communion and is excited about it, but she doesn't understand confirmation. That your kid is not excited about it just indicates that your kid is a good theologian.

So what happens when you confirm 10<sup>th</sup> graders and you are able to key into the adolescent need for gang identity. And you give them a gang identity constellated around a formation process and ritual. ***But you are not really initiating them into the church.*** You are merely harnessing an adolescent need for affiliation and hoping that will turn into a permanent commitment.

Then, you also have some priests that are abusing marriage to recruit for Confirmation. There are some priests that are refusing to marry people that have not been confirmed.

He is forcing it. I'm confirming a bunch of bridegrooms...getting them ready for confirmation which he whips through and slam bam thank you mam. ***There's no affiliation with a particular community.*** It makes me crazy.

### ***Comments***

Mary's frustrations with various institutional practices were evident at this point. She believed she was trying to hold the tension of making a meaningful practice out of a ritual

that was being abused and was theologically “bankrupt.” She made it quite clear that she did not think the church was actually initiating people into the church, but was sanctioning the ritual for their own purpose or benefit. There was a distinct lack of organizational unity in the practice in her church which led to a fragmented initiation process being conducted for a wide variety of reasons. At this point, Mary comments more specifically on the attrition and some of the sociological reasons for it.

### *Reincorporation and Dissonance*

PK: So when you’re done with confirmation here. What % of the kids do you still see on a regular basis. And how many are in your confirmation classes?

MS: I don’t know because we just altered our practices so drastically. The first year, our pastor just confirmed one kid because most of our kids have been confirmed younger. We are still aging out the kids that were confirmed in restored order. We don’t have anything normative at this point. I think there are 40-50 kids in the two classes split between 9-10 graders. By and large the young people who choose to be confirmed are a minority. Practically everybody makes it to first communion. If I had to hazard a wild guess I would say in lots of parishes now, maybe 25% of kids who make first communion go on to get confirmed at some point. I’m pulling that out of thin air. It’s a small number. And the kids that tend to proceed to confirmation are not kids that will become anchored in the church because of confirmation, they are kids who seek confirmation because their families are already active in the church.

PK: So the kids that hang around tend to be in the church already.

MS: They come from heavily church families. They would hang around no matter what.

PK: Do they continue to hang around after Confirmation?

MS: Some do and some don’t. Kids from heavily church families either have made an interior appropriation of that alignment by the time they are 18 or they are wild to reject it as soon as mom and dad aren’t calling the shots. If kids get turned onto to their faith in high school catechesis of whatever sort, it has more to do with whom they interact with than what sort of thing they are marched through.

If we did preparatory catechesis for drivers’ license, we’d have a fighting chance to get some kids that we might not otherwise get. And because we would be giving them concrete equipment for what they are going to do we might have a better chance for internal appropriation. The other difficulty we have is that confirmation is positioned in the Catholic tradition that a baptized Catholic is entitled to the other sacraments.

Only for grave reasons do you deny someone a sacrament after he/she has been baptized.

The difficulty is you cannot have a sacrament that is a rite of passage, because the essence of a rite of passage is that you *earn* your man or womanhood and if you do not perform you do not change status. So that's absolutely the antithesis of Catholic sacramental theology that says all the sacraments flow from baptism and all baptized infants are entitled to the other sacraments. Too many confirmation programs are structured as rites of passage, which means if you don't do the service project, if you don't do this... you can't do that. I am not going to kick anybody out. We do tell people that attendance is required as that's my concession to human nature. If I made it optional, no one would come.

PK: In one church I was in....it's to the point where it's once a month and it's too much. Another place it's lot of conflict with school settings.

MS: In high school they all have jobs. And if family has to choose between a sports activity and a religious activity, it's the rare family that chooses the religious one: they are afraid that if they pull their kids out of sports their kids are going to lose socially and hate church. If they pull them out of church, parents see no real loss.

### ***Comments***

This last section demonstrates that, in addition to the dislocated organizational structure, Mary faced the same challenges of competition in the wider culture as other directors.

### ***Summary of Confirmation Director Interviews***

The evidence offered by the Confirmation directors outlines a pattern of initiate attrition and subsequent dissonance in the ritual process. They have the broadest and most detailed perspective on the dynamics in their parishes – especially those who have been in their field for extended periods of time. They each acknowledged confirmands are not present in meaningful numbers post-initiation, and the church has no systematic way of tracking them. Some of the main sociological factors contributing to the attrition included a focus on individualization of faith perspective, competition with disconnected social spheres, and high human agency and mobility – all of which are explored more fully in the ensuing analysis of the next chapters.



Before further analysis, however, more evidence is required from the institution. To the extent possible, I contacted relevant sources related to Catholic initiation with broader views of the process, interviewing two prominent Catholic figures in the Minneapolis area. The first was the Faith Formation Director at a very large metro high school whose constituency encompasses at least twelve different parishes in western Minneapolis. The second was one of the lead bishops in the Arch-Diocese office who confirms initiates from across the state of Minnesota. Because they relate to initiates from a wide variety of parishes, their interview responses provided the broader view I sought. The data of these supplementary interviews presented below corroborates the reports of the confirmation directors, and adds more detail and texture to the reasons underpinning initiate attrition in this context.

### **III. Wider Contacts**

#### **James Larson / St. Therese Catholic School**

##### *Sociological Issue: Tension Between School and Church in Initiation*

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, James was a theology teacher at the school and led the faith formation program. He had experience in churches and was interested in seeing the students develop in their faith journeys in the midst of their academic pursuits. However, this led to tension in the initiation process as confirmation was evolving to replace incorporation and parish membership with personal formation. Parents complained they already had faith formation in school, so why bother adding a church program on Wednesday evenings to their busy schedules. Instead, the faith formation at school should be structured to accommodate catechesis. This idea was further strengthened in their minds since the majority of their children's friends were located in the school, not in the churches. They didn't know many of their peers in the church and did not plan on having further relationships with them

there. James touched on this issue in his interview while also reaffirming the normative sociological barriers outlined by the confirmation directors in this context.

### ***Interview Content***

PK: If it's supposed to be a community function in the parishes, why do it here?

JL: That is EXACTLY what we say. We do a basic, here's what sacraments are. Here are the official seven. Here is what is a sacrament. Here are the rites and rituals that goes with each of the sacraments. Here is where we say Jesus did these things. And then we leave it at that. Lots of Catholic school do courses on sacraments and we do not...not even as an elective.

PK: One of the most common themes I've run into is the competition for time.....the idea that families saying they just should get confirmed in the school.

JL: Clearly families have hundreds of options. And our kids have parents willing to pay for different options. But I can only speak to that question as a parent. As a parent of young kids we make a commitment not to over involve our kids. My values are family, respecting people, and celebrating people's dignity. I don't get to know my own kids and I'm driving around 4 days a week and they are learning and socializing because of their peers.

Very few families think that way. They think like consumers. What church has the easiest confirmation program? Unfortunately a lot of people are looking for who has the easiest hoop and that is exactly what we don't want. We want parents to see the value of their kids being connected to God is a good idea.

PK: Hallie and I talk about how connected we were with one another living in Scotland. We feel human again after about a week or two of being there. We are walking the kids to school, to the store, etc. Getting to know my kids.

JL: And that's what they need. I agree with you that we are wired for relationship. I'm convinced our society will eventually see that. Right now we are still a consuming...all about consuming...eventually people will see it's not about getting in, it's about being together.

PK: One of the common themes I've heard is the sheer level of competition for people's time and that we become fragmented.....not an integrated person. This leads to a huge challenge after confirmation to keep people in the church. What have you noticed in terms of the ability to follow-up?

JL: I think the philosophy of saying we have ongoing faith formation with confirmation as an ongoing piece of it. If that was the dynamic of the parish you would catechize your families to understand that there is no rule about junior year.

I think we have as a culture we really want things done quick and clean. Give me a deadline and a goal. Faith formation is a journey not a goal. The real key to confirmation is the exact opposite of what we sell. Junior year you get confirmed and then you can do whatever you want? How counter is that to the sacrament? So we should be saying the exact opposite, when you are ready for a commitment, let's get confirmed. It's the norm to say that we'll have this big pile of kids this confirmation year and then they disappear.

I think there's a sense or feeling that I'm okay as a parent because I got my kid through confirmation. I don't know what's underneath that. I know when I push parents to suggest their kids wait, I get pretty big push back.

So in an ideal setting the program would be feeding kids and after they are confirmed there would be a heightened and more intense commitment instead of a drop off. I think the key to that is to keep meeting regularly to affirm their individual dignity and give them support to live Christ-like lives and to feel the relationships around them are really supporting that.

### *Comments*

James noted the same patterns and themes related to cultural competition and lack of interest in church matters among initiates. Thus, this interview corroborated the individual reports of the confirmation directors. James did offer the possibility of churches where there were follow-up programs for youth, but did not mention any sites by name. He suggested churches with programs supporting the faith journeys of the youth may retain them more effectively to some degree, though he seemed unaware of the fact that the youth may not even want this. For example, my interviews with Bob Sanford revealed he had such programs in place, but his attrition rates were still quite high. Terry Larson discontinued their post-initiation programs due to lack of interest and attrition. None of the other churches offered any kind of program. Thus James' comments could elicit follow-up research in parishes that do have post-initiation programs; however, I could find no such examples in the context of the western suburbs of Minneapolis and pursuing this beyond this context was beyond the scope of the research. Like Keith's list, they may not exist.

## **Bishop Parsons / Offices of the Arch-Diocese**

### *Sociological Issue: Cultural Shift From Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft*

I spoke with Bishop Parsons for well over an hour in the arch-diocese offices. One of the primary themes emerging from the interview related to a cultural shift in this context over the past forty years from tightly-knit communities organized in a *Gemeinschaft* patterns to the disparate communities in a *Gesellschaft* pattern. The latter contexts features self-contained, individualized networks commonly based on location or affinity. Bishop Parsons notes the culture, when organized this way, no longer carries along the individual and their faith journey in the sacraments; and without the social pressures to be a part of the community, the church must help individuals discover internal and intrinsic motivation for continuing the participate in the community. However, Bishop Parsons notes this is quite difficult to achieve in the midst of intense, competing social pressures – a theme consistent with previous interviews of confirmation directors.

### ***Interview Content***

BP: Young adults that are working are a new breed, and there is a new phenomenon because they have a lot more ability to move around and they have varied interests and they do tend to gravitate towards one another and their own group...on the weekends and they travel with one another.

So we have like Basicalla, Cathedral of groups of 50-100 of young adults that are usually in the work force and are entry level...a lot of times professionals...and it comes and goes....a lot of time these things are very transitional and a moving target.

PK: Can you give me some perspective of what you've seen over the last forty years? What have you noticed related to parental expectations and the sacraments as central identity markers for people?

BP: I think you made an accurate appraisal that it is because of parental expectation or encouragement that they go through. I grew up in Nativity in St. Paul, the equivalent of a Catholic ghetto. We lived very close to one another, our friends went to grade school together...the parents and the families and the religious practice and culture was tightly bound together and the expectations that were there...you just...in a certain sense, your religious identity was carried along by (the culture.) ...Now I think with confirmation coming with an older age and recognizing that our culture is no longer going to carry the faith and not just a matter of sharing the faith, some would

suggest we need to have catechesis and it's amazing how people just don't know....basic information about the church or the founding. And so all we need to do is have greater catechesis and form them as adults and have more information.

The other thing we do and encourage is the day of confirmation is that they invite their parents, siblings and Grandparents. For them this is a very important statement too....generation to generation....invite the grandparents and they show up for it....and it speaks to them of a familial bonding...a lot of them have a love for their grandparents and an appreciation for them and a love for them. Some of it you just have to leave up to the Spirit, because you can't have follow-up.

PK: It's been interesting talking with the different confirmation directors. They have articulated some of the challenges they have faced....do you sense that some of the mobility and technology of our culture factors in?

BP: It's the secularization of our society and the wave today. I was out in the suburbs with the pastor of St. Ambrose. Wonderful kids and they participate a lot, but the sport wave is now soccer and baseball and traveling basketball where parents will take their kids on weekends and spend all this effort and money and energy and time, but then they form also a social group that becomes their friends and support group in a tightly knit bonded community and team. And then they get together and travel every weekend here and there.....Some of them will insist some of their kids go to mass...somewhere (the world is our parish)....they fulfill the obligation but then you also want to say to grow in the community with the Spirit so that is where you need to generate the faith within our own community...and what needs to surface is a commitment to evangelism. We generally mean awakening of Jesus in your life and discipleship and witness to community and our own home so it becomes a matter of choice that I am a Christian.

### **Comments**

There are several relevant observations regarding Bishop Parsons' comments. Firstly, he describes a cultural shift taking place in how the faith journey needs to be conceived among youth in our culture. With the influence of individualistic agency, the church needs to emphasize the development of personal commitment to avoid ongoing and increasing attrition. In his experience, the church is no longer carried by the communal expectations of tight-knit, *Gemeinschaft* context in which "authorities" prescribe the behaviors for the next generations. Secondly, as a related issue, he described the tension in that there is no effective means of mentoring or "following-up" with the youth after the initiation process. Though he tries to impress upon them the importance of the moment at their confirmation, the effects of

that moment seem to wear off in the absence of ongoing community and mentoring. Thirdly, he appeals to the universal, invisible community of the church as it relates to mass attendance expectations, thus de-emphasizing the localized expression of community. Finally, he reinforces the consistent theme of cultural “busyness” and how parents and children spend long periods of time involved in athletic groups on the weekend. It is common for athletic tournaments to begin Saturday morning and end Sunday afternoons. Games are regularly scheduled Sunday mornings when youth could –if they wished - be attending church. However, in order to stay connected with the teams, families commonly forego church attendance. These factors will be more fully addressed in the analysis chapters.

These two additional sources from a large Catholic high school and a lead bishop in the Archdiocese corroborate the evidence gleaned from the Confirmation directors: confirmands commonly do not have meaningful ties to their parish post-initiation. Their data provides meaningful triangulation for my observations from the first year of fieldwork as well as the reports of confirmation directors working at the local level of initiation. However, to this point, there is no specific data from the past initiates. Therefore, near the end of the second year of research, I considered the feasibility of conducting a qualitative interview of students at a local Catholic university to determine whether, in this way, I could glean information directly from the initiates themselves. The results of this attempt are briefly described below.

#### **IV. Survey Results: *St. Francis University***

I inquired of the Chair of the Catholic Studies Department, Dr. Richard Kanton, of St. Francis University whether I might conduct a survey of students who were also recent initiates. He agreed to a meeting and I outlined the project for him there. He seemed excited about the idea, inviting me to return and present my data to his faculty. Subsequently, he

helped develop a process in which he contacted the general education Theology teachers to distribute anonymous surveys to the students in their courses.

The demographics of students attending St. Francis approximate to that of the western suburbs of Minneapolis in which I conducted parish research. These parallels do not eliminate contextual variability, but a comparison between the two based on census data shows the base constituency is quite similar, thus minimizing the variables. The students are generally of the same race, ethnicity and class as evidenced in the racial mix and the types of degrees pursued by those in the university when compared to the average income of those in the suburbs. Also, the tuition at the university is quite high and is affordable only by those in upper income brackets. The following table compares the university with one of the cities in the Minneapolis suburbs.

***Demographics of St. Benedicts' Constituency***

**CENSUS DATA**

<b>RACE</b>	<b>White Population</b> The estimated White population in the community is 3,953, which is 96.1 percent of the total population (The U.S. average is 75.10%).
<b>HOUSING</b>	<b>Monthly Owner Costs</b> For homes with a mortgage, average monthly owner costs were \$1,815 (national average was \$1,088). For homes without a mortgage, average costs per month were \$606 (national average was \$295).
<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>High School Graduate or higher</b> At the time of the last survey, 2,939 people in the community had a high school degree, or 96.5 of the population (compared to the national average of 80.40%). <b>Bachelor's Degree or Higher</b> 1,467 people in the city also had a Bachelor's degree or higher, which represented 48.1 of the total population (National average was 24.40%).
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>Median Family Income</b> In the last complete census survey, the median family income in the community was \$96,859. Median family income in the U.S. was 50,046. <b>Per Capita Income</b> Per capita income in the last full census was 63,859. Per capita income in the U.S. was 21,587.

## B. Demographics of St. Francis University.

### *Most Popular Fields of Study*

	Men	Women	Total
<b><u>Business Administration and Manage...</u></b>	203	166	369
<b><u>Marketing/Marketing Management, General</u></b>	52	92	144
<b><u>Law (LL</u></b>	68	71	139
<b><u>Finance, General</u></b>	98	41	139

### *Student Tuition Costs and Fees*

	In District	In State	Out of State
<b>FT Undergraduate Tuition</b>	\$25,808	\$25,808	\$25,808
<b>FT Undergraduate Required Fees</b>	\$466	\$466	\$466
<b>PT Undergraduate per Credit Hour</b>	\$807	\$807	\$807
<b>FT Graduate Tuition</b>	\$12,600	\$12,600	\$12,600
<b>FT Graduate Required Fees</b>	\$142	\$142	\$142
<b>PT Graduate per Credit Hour</b>	\$700	\$700	\$700
<b>Total Cost of Attendance — On-Campus</b>	\$36,736	\$36,736	\$36,736

The correlation between parish and university is seen both in the undergraduate ethnic mix that is heavily tilted towards Caucasian as well as the annual income of those living in one of the cities involved in the research. However, there was no practical way of determining what percentage of students from the various parishes in the research attend St. Francis as there are several other Catholic universities from which to choose in Minnesota as



well as the United States at large. Therefore, even with parallels in ethnic mix and economics, the qualitative data gained from the survey is not as tightly correlated as it would be if the aggregate sample was 100% derived from parish initiates.

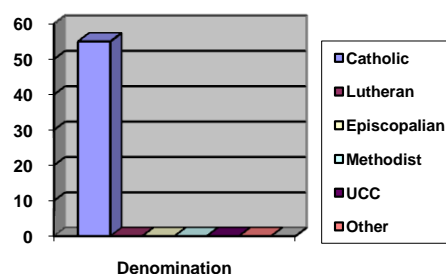
The survey was distributed by several professors and completed by fifty-six students. The survey attempted to gain information related to both a pattern of attrition as well as exploring the possible influence of competing social spheres with that of the church. In this chapter, only excerpts relevant to rates of initiate attrition are provided. Further survey results are included in the analysis of the ensuing chapters relating to competing social spheres and other possible explanations for the pattern of attrition.

## ***Survey Excerpts***

### **I. Personal Information**

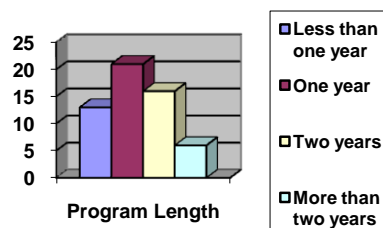
#### **1. In what denomination were you confirmed?**

- |    |              |      |
|----|--------------|------|
| a. | Catholic     | (55) |
| b. | Lutheran     | (0)  |
| c. | Episcopalian | (1)  |
| d. | Methodist    | (0)  |
| e. | UCC          | (0)  |
| f. | Other        | (0)  |



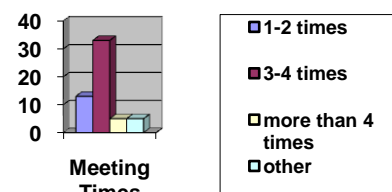
#### **2. How long was your Confirmation Program?**

- |    |                     |      |
|----|---------------------|------|
| a. | Less than one year  | (13) |
| b. | One year            | (21) |
| c. | Two years           | (16) |
| d. | More than two years | (6)  |



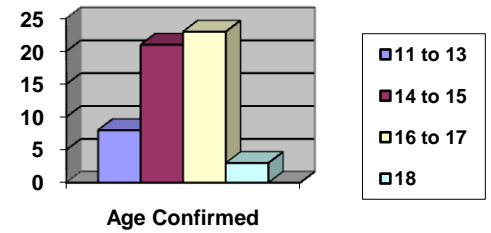
#### **3. How many times did you meet per month for Confirmation?**

- |    |                   |      |
|----|-------------------|------|
| a. | 1-2 times         | (13) |
| b. | 3-4 times         | (33) |
| c. | more than 4 times | (5)  |
| d. | Other             | (5)  |



**4. How old were you when you were confirmed?**

- a. 11-13 (8)
- b. 14-15 (21)
- c. 16-17 (23)
- d. 18 (3)

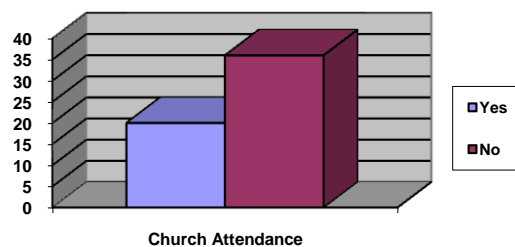


**5. About how many confirmands participated in your confirmation class?**

<b>Estimated Aggregate</b>	2,382 (over ten students did not answer or could only give a rough estimate)
<b>Range of Class Size</b>	2 confirmands on low end / 300 confirmands on high end
<b>Average Class Size</b>	45

**7. In the year after Confirmation, did you regularly interact (at least once a week) with at least half of the confirmands from your Confirmation class?**

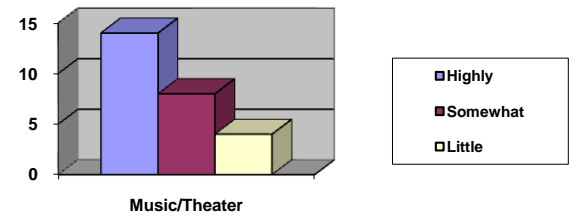
- Yes (20)
- No (36)



9. Please circle the phrases that best describe the extent/depth of your involvement in a given group in the year or two after Confirmation.

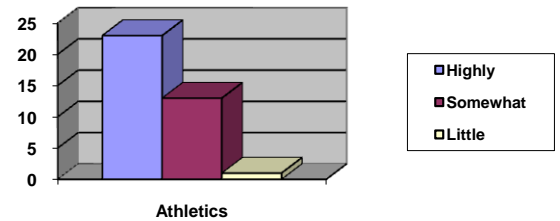
a. *Music/Theater*

highly involved (14)  
somewhat involved (8)  
little involvement (4)



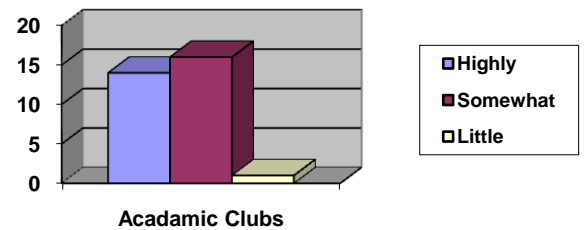
b. *Athletics*

highly involved (23)  
somewhat involved (13)  
little involvement (1)



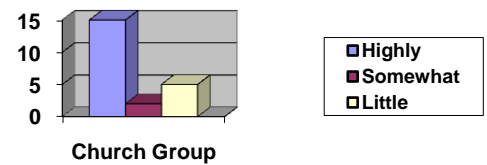
c. *Academic clubs*

highly involved (14)  
somewhat involved (16)  
little involvement (1)



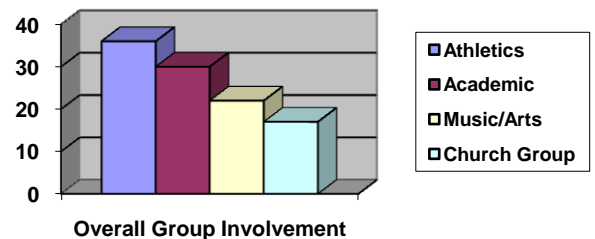
d. *Church group*

highly involved (15)  
somewhat involved (2)  
little involvement (5)



e. *Overall Group Involvement of either "highly" or "somewhat" involved following sacramental initiation.*

Athletics (36)  
Academic Clubs (30)  
Music/Arts (22)  
Church Group (17)

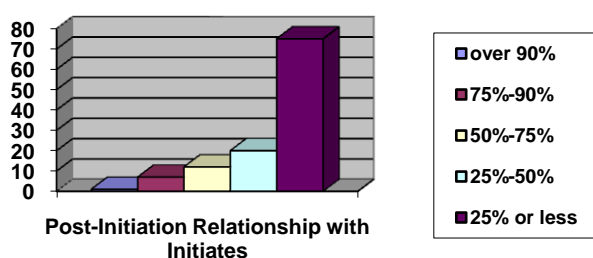


**The next question relates to the interconnectedness among the relationships and groups**

**List one of the groups in which you participated and circle the nearest approximate percentage of the confirmands with whom you went through Confirmation that were also a part of your listed group.**

NAME OF GROUP FROM ABOVE LIST: \_\_\_\_\_

- a. over 90% of confirmands participated in this group with me (1)
- b. 75%-90% of confirmands participated in this group with me (7)
- c. 50%-75% of confirmands participated in this group with me (12)
- d. 25%-50% of confirmands participated in this group with me (20)
- e. less than 25 of confirmands participated in this group with me (75)



## Survey Summary

Thirty-six of the students (65%) reported not having once-a-week contact with others from their Confirmation class in the year after their initiation despite the fact they would still be living in the same community as seventeen and eighteen year olds. In addition, most initiates were involved in several different social groups and in seventy-five of these groups they reported that less than 25% of their fellow initiates participated in them as well. Another twenty students said only 25-50% of the students were in the same groups. These percentages indicate a lack of ongoing involvement in the localized expression of the community of their initiation, and corroborate the reports of the Confirmation Directors in that the majority of initiates have little or no relational contact with their fellow class of initiates. Thus, this survey provides additional evidence for the claim that there is a pattern of initiate attrition in this context.

## **V. Conclusion**

The data presented in this chapter from the second year of research was comprised of the reports of five additional confirmation directors, a high school director of faith formation, a local bishop from the arch-diocese, and a survey of fifty-six past initiates, and their reports all provide evidence of high rates of initiate attrition. Such attrition reveals dissonance in the process since common expectations of initiation, as seen in chapter two, include reincorporation into the community and ongoing relationships in the initiation context. Thus we see the central claim of this dissertation established by the research process and interviews of these two fieldwork chapters where the high rate of initiate attrition creates a dissonance in Catholic initiation since there are discrepancies between the expectations of the institution and the practice at the local level.

With this claim established, attention now shifts to the final two analysis chapters in which the data of the fieldwork is compared to other local initiation rituals, contextual factors explained, and possible explanations for the rate attrition offered. This analysis takes this specific fieldwork and connects it to larger societal trends in which we find that such attrition is not unique to Catholic initiation in this context, but is part of an overall macro-societal shift in which the same dissonance affects other traditional forms of initiation. Bishop Parsons alluded to this when he said culture no longer carries people along. Thus, one of the main intentions of the analysis is to help explain why the attrition occurs and to open future lines of inquiry.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *Analysis*

#### **I. Introduction**

The previous chapters described how the confirmation directors and fieldwork informants in the Catholic churches reported a high rate of attrition post-initiation in the western suburbs of Minneapolis. Their interviews establish a pattern of dissonance in the ritual process as the institutional expectation of post-initiation incorporation conflicts with the disappearance of initiates from the church at the local level. Yet even with this point established questions emerge that require analysis. Therefore, this chapter is the first of two where questions and possible objections pertaining to the thesis are outlined – a necessary process to further support the validity and applicability of the claim.

The current chapter addresses two such questions. Firstly, the opening section of the chapter asks whether this pattern of dissonance is relatively insignificant because it comes from specific Catholic churches, or if it is more significant in that the attrition is indicative of broader social trends in the surrounding context and beyond. Should the former be the case, the thesis lacks etic application and, though interesting in its way, is not as relevant for social theory, whereas were it the latter, the thesis may well point to potential issues in initiation and reincorporation extending beyond this context. In other words, is the attrition and dissonance in the fieldwork significant because it is indicative of a larger trend similar to the patterns of dissonance outlined in chapter one and how they applied across many contexts?

To answer this question, one must go beyond the reports of the confirmation directors who attributed attrition to broader cultural influences such as competition from other social spheres, individualized faith perspectives, mobility, and lack of ritual awareness by engaging in comparative analysis of non-Catholic initiation rituals in the western suburbs of Minneapolis as well as Catholic initiation in other social classes and settings. In order to

develop the comparisons I conducted fieldwork and interviews in several local Protestant churches church, interviewed priests in two rural Catholic parishes, a director of a para-church ministry, and included several questions related to this in the survey done at the local university. The aim was to corroborate and triangulate the data to see if attrition is part of a larger issue or specific to the local context. As we shall see from the narrative, interviews, and survey results, attrition is not simply a phenomenon in the Catholic churches, but is pervasive in the surrounding culture.

The second question, outlined in the following section, addresses the possibility that critical analysis may indicate dissonance. This possibility is raised for two reasons. Firstly, even though initiates may leave the local church in which they went through initiation, they may be participating in another parish – perhaps out of personal choice or because it is specific to the location in which they live if they moved for college or occupational reasons. This is a critical potential objection because the Catholic ritual process initiates members into the universal, invisible church with local expressions around the world. Therefore, as long as initiates are attending church somewhere, there would be no dissonance as they are indeed incorporated into the “Church Universal.” Secondly, it is also possible that even though they do disappear after initiation, they return to the church in significant percentages later in life and begin participating more fully. In this case, the dissonance is real though temporary.

As we shall see, however, quantitative data from American research organizations such as Pew Research and the Cara Research Group indicate widespread church attrition and decreasing participation in church activities over the past four generations. In addition, anecdotal media reports from various newspaper and internet mediums regularly chronicle the difficulties facing the church based on decline in membership and participation. Attrition seems to be a permanent trend within the church cutting across a wide variety of cultural spectrums. This research thus mirrors broader social dynamics.

With these questions framing the chapter, attention turns first to the data demonstrating that broader social trends are affecting initiation rituals beyond that of the Catholic churches in the fieldwork. This analysis begins with the Protestant fieldwork conducted in Alexandria Community Church (ACC) concurrently with the fieldwork in the Catholic Churches. This description is then followed by interview data from confirmation directors in Protestant churches across various denominations. In each case, the Protestant churches experienced high rates of attrition similar to that of the Catholic churches. Next, interview excerpts from rural Catholic parishes are provided demonstrating how even these contexts are affected by attrition despite demographical variance. Finally, more extensive data from the surveys conducted at St. Thomas University is offered as further insight into the attrition pattern and the types of fragmented relationships initiates commonly experience as part of their post-confirmation experience. All this evidence demonstrates that attrition is not restricted to just one location but is part of a broader trend of dissonance in initiation.

## **II. Initiation Dissonance as Broader Social Trend. Comparative Analysis**

### ***Evidence from Fieldwork In Alexandria Community Church***

Following the original research design, I conducted fieldwork in Alexandria Community Church (ACC), a United Church of Christ in the Protestant pattern approximately seven miles from St. Benedict's. Confirmation in the United Church of Christ completes initiation into church membership, and it is then expected initiates participate in church activities with the benefits of the voting rights and privileges a member is due. The interview scope at ACC was initially similar to that of St. Benedict's in that I intended to interview forty to fifty past initiates as well as current initiates, catechists, and other relevant informants. The purpose of this information was to gain a comparative population sample to the central fieldwork involved in the Catholic churches.



My access to ACC resulted from ongoing relationships with some of the pastoral staff as well as with extended family members who attended the church. Based on this, I contacted Greg and Heather Finn, a married couple who ran the confirmation program, and they agreed to start working with me. We then held an initial meeting in the summer of 2005 in which we discussed my project more fully, including the experience at St. Benedict's in which I could not locate past initiates. We then agreed finding past initiates should be the first priority in order to ensure I could fulfill the research design. They said they could use their internal computer database to cross-reference names and ages in order to generate a list of confirmands from the past five to ten years, and Heather informed me she would start working on this right away. We also discussed contacting current confirmands and catechists which seemed relatively easy to arrange in their opinion. I then left the meeting and we promised to begin the work that winter.

We communicated via e-mail over the next few months to make sure the project was on track, and our next face-to-face meeting took place in February of 2006 in which Heather provided me with the names, addresses, and phone numbers of two hundred past confirmands. To maximize potential participation, Heather also drafted a letter of introduction explaining the nature of the research and informing the addressees I would be phoning them to set up interviews regarding their current connections to the church. She then helped me mail the letters and the church split the cost with me for the mailings and showed me a room in the church that had a phone with a dedicated voice mail system for the project so, if necessary, I could leave messages with the initiates and request they return the call with a reply on the church line. With the letters sent and these systems in place, I returned two weeks later on a Tuesday afternoon with the intention of contacting one hundred initiates on this first day, hoping to arrange a minimum of twenty-five interviews.

As I started the process, however, it quickly became clear the goal was too ambitious as the phone calls resulted in one of three outcomes. Firstly, approximately 50% of the calls were not answered and I left a voice message asking for a return call. Secondly, the phone was answered by a parent or sibling who told me the initiate no longer lived at this address and they were not comfortable passing out the initiates' personal information, promising only to have them phone me after they passed along my message. Finally, I spoke directly with two initiates. They were unavailable for face-to-face conversations but promised to converse via e-mail if I was interested. Based on these results for the first one hundred phone calls, it seemed as if I would be unable to gain the interviews I needed. However, I decided to wait a week to determine if I would receive return calls in the voice mail system from the fifty or so contacts with whom I left a message.

The following Tuesday I checked the system and found no calls from past initiates and six responses from a member of their family informing me the address and phone number on record was no longer accurate. This meant that of the first one hundred phone calls only two people proved willing to provide information (via e-mail) and ninety-eight were difficult to locate as the computer either did not have updated records for where they lived and how to contact them, or they simply did not return my call. When I met with Greg and Heather to discuss the results, they did not seem surprised and agreed it seemed to be difficult to find past initiates in meaningful enough numbers to continue the project in its current form. The majority of initiates were no longer connected to the church and ACC did not keep accurate records of their whereabouts. Based on this information, I told Greg and Heather I would need to put the project on hold.

In this way, ACC proved little different from the Catholic churches in terms of attrition on a comparative basis, which suggested the attrition in both cases was likely part of a broader social trend. As this information was gathered concurrently with that of the

Catholic churches, it contributed to the methodological revision for the second year of research described last chapter. As I began the second year of research in the Catholic context, I also met with Greg and Heather to debrief on the different approach to the fieldwork. I asked if I could interview specific members of their community including them, their lead pastor James Rosen, and several parents of current initiates, explaining that I needed further evidence regarding broader sociological dynamics contributing to the initiate attrition in this context. They agreed and additionally suggested I should attend the “Confirmation Kick-off” in the fall in which they outlined the annual program for all prospective families. They would give me time at this meeting to describe the project and solicit interviews of the parents of the confirmands.

I attended the introductory meeting and conducted interviews over the next three months, the content of which revealed initiate attrition was likely attributable to similar cultural forces as described in the Catholic context such as individualized sense of faith, fragmented communities, and highly empowered human agency – which suggested dissonance in initiation is not specific to the Catholic Church, although the latter does have ecclesial complications lacking in congregation-based churches. The details of these interviews are outlined briefly below, again redacted to highlight the most salient points from lengthy conversations. Though the correlation with that Catholic church interviews is somewhat self-evident, brief analytical comments are both embedded in the narrative description and provided at the end of this section.

### ***Interviews from Year Two at ACC***

#### ***Parent Interviews***

Greg and Heather expected approximately sixty initiates for the 2006-2007 confirmation program – all of whom were invited to attend the “kick-off” event. We discussed logistical details in preparation for the event and I was given five minutes to

describe the research and ask parents to voluntarily agree to interviews by providing their names and phone numbers on a sign-up sheet. In an attempt to engender trust, create an “insider” perception, and maximize participation, I intentionally referred to people I knew in the church during the presentation and informed them my wife went through confirmation at ACC as well. I then stated I would phone them in the weeks ahead to arrange for interviews on Wednesday evenings since they would already be at church. In this way, I would not be inconveniencing them by asking for additional time or meeting during the week. Eighteen families signed up for the interviews and I left the meeting believing I would gain a wide range of information from them.

However, similar to before, as I phoned the families many of them decided they did not have time to participate or, if I left messages, did not return the calls. At the end of the process only three families agreed to meet with me – a fact that seemed to demonstrate the busyness of the culture and that individual agency (or second thoughts) supersedes community expectations in this context. Families often dropped their children off at confirmation and drove off to deliver another child or attend meetings elsewhere. They too seemed generally disconnected from the church on a day-to-day basis, and the church did not provide them with “something to do” in the church while their children were in confirmation. Such dynamics were also present in the three interviews I did conduct, alongside of other social factors that contributed to the rates of attrition. A brief description of these interviews follows below.

In the first interview, the mother discussed her sense of faith and claimed to be uncertain as to which religious tradition she belonged. She grew up Catholic and still felt strong ties to the church despite marrying a Protestant husband and bringing her daughter to ACC. She expressed hope that, at some point, her daughter would return to the Catholic Church, but did not want to force her to do anything since individualized choice seemed a

significant priority to her. She made her own choice to leave the Catholic Church and now provides the same freedom to her daughter. In analyzing her comments, it appears the emphasis on personal freedom creates tension with traditional initiation as individuals are free to move among various contexts according to their preference instead of abiding by community norms. She says:

I don't know what I am.....I mean a lot of my friends had to marry Catholic boys. Because you were Catholic, you couldn't even date someone who wasn't Catholic. (But) my brother set the precedent in that he married someone Lutheran, and they have raised their kids Lutheran. So it was easy to say, 'Mark isn't Catholic and.....the kids will be able to choose.' We said back then that as adults they could choose what they wanted. We made that decision for them now, but who knows, maybe 20 years from now Emily will go back into the Catholic church.....

In the second interview the mother expressed a desire to move after her children graduated from high school. She indicated she did not feel connected to the community and was hoping to move back to Canada (where she was from) or somewhere out in the western United States. She acknowledged her girls knew little of her background or the relational context to which she still felt connected back "home". Given her dissatisfaction, the theme of mobility and choice pervaded her interview, and there seemed little indication the initiation of her daughters would result in incorporation in the local context. She says:

I'm leaving. They know I'm leaving. When they graduate, I don't know where I'm going. Either back to Canada or out West. I miss it. I want to go back to where the pace of life is a bit slower....not as much crime. I just want to go back to where I'm from. I don't know that I'll get back...if I get close, it's similar. I think I would like my kids to know where I'm from. All they know is me here...not my life there. I mean they know some people there. They see my family and my friends from time to time....but we're so far away that they really don't know where I'm from.

The final interview involved a married couple who recently returned to the church after an extended absence so their children could attend confirmation. They moved into the

community and began “church shopping” to determine which church offered the types of programs for which they were looking. They visited a number of churches and decided ACC would be the best fit based on the recommendation of their neighbors. Attending church was still a relatively new pattern for them as they left the church in their early twenties to focus on other priorities, being “self-absorbed” and ready to choose for themselves. Leaving home and establishing one’s independence seemed to have trumped community and incorporation.

We did go through a period in college.....happened to all my friends.....you get so busy and try to establish yourself in life, and part of that is you are so self-absorbed. I went to a college town to leave home and establish my independence. The social impact of Saturday nights means you are out late, you are tired, and you don’t go to church on Sundays.

(Remembering back) I went through confirmation with a bunch of friends so there was a lot of horse-playing and stuff like that. I remember a lot of memorization. I don’t think they needed that...they didn’t make it fun. You just went through the motions....not really thinking about what you did, you just did it. An extension of school almost. They had a ministry for post-confirmands but neither me nor my friends did this.

*Senior Pastor Interview: James Rosen*

Approximately three weeks after completing the parent interviews, I met with Pastor Rosen. He was a friend of my wife’s family as my mother-in-law served as his executive assistant. He had been the senior pastor of ACC for four years, having moved from a large church in an upper-class context in Ohio prior to taking this position. He was quite busy overseeing a church of several thousand people, but we managed to take an hour to discuss his experience and perspective of youth in his church and in the surrounding culture. His perspective was informed by having four young children of his own, and his main points related to this personal experience of competition for attention among families who have the power to choose among a variety of social contexts.

- PK: Tell me about the average income of the church.....
- JR: I don't know off the top of my head. We did a financial/stewardship thing when I first got here and I could provide that for you easily, but you know this Western suburb out here is pretty crazy rich. This church is a pretty good reflection of the area around it. We have people of very modest means and we have some that are sitting there that are certainly millionaires and maybe a couple of billionaires.
- PK: Part of the reason why that's relevant is that income brings with it opportunities that other people in the world don't necessarily have...choice, freedom to be engaged in things. In investing their time in the culture they have to make a choice between the church and the culture.
- JR: Well, those who have kids, it's the kids. Those that don't have kids, it's the fine arts and the causes. Our associate pastor is competing with careers and busyness. Especially when you're having classes at 10:00 am, you're not going to get professionals. If you're talking about worship, I don't think that's a major competitive force except to the degree that it is culture-wide. But Sunday is not Sabbath anymore at all. But if you're talking about anybody from the 30-50 range that have kids either young or old...the amount of time and money.....they are pouring into our kids is obscene.
- I don't mean we shouldn't be investing in our kids....I'm charging myself here....two girls in hockey, son in skiing and soccer...even my four-year-old has more structure in his life than I had when I was in High School. And I see it...I see confirmation as one of those few times in the life of the church where we can play that game. There's still some social value to that in our culture. More so here than in much of the country. Even more than good ol Midwest Ohio. And to think about Confirmation being more than a central piece of the culture on the East coast....not a chance. When I tell friends back in Ohio about Wednesday night church here, they are like, "WOW....seriously that sounds so old-fashioned!"

### *Confirmation Director(s) Interview: Greg and Heather*

The final interview from ACC was with Greg and Heather in which they described their experience with and efforts over retention and attrition. Their primary strategy involved implementing a youth program into which initiates are incorporated before and reincorporated after confirmation – providing a place of ongoing relationships with other youth in the church. The program also met on Wednesday evenings and featured small-group discussion on a variety of issues. However, even with the time and effort placed on this

program, their retention rate still did not exceed 25% immediately after initiation, and the rates seemed to drop even lower in each succeeding year. At their “Senior Send-Off” service in which the congregation “blessed” the high school seniors as they graduated, only two of the possible fifty or more confirmands participated. Greg and Heather described their frustration with this dynamic and suggested the emphasis on voluntary attendance was part of the problem.

GF: We do talk about responsibility of giving your time and your money and the talents that you have to the church. But there is a grace that is part of our church, so if you haven’t been here for 6 months it’s not like you are in trouble. ‘Welcome back, we’ve missed you, what have you been up to?’ Whereas if you didn’t get to the basketball camp this summer you’re not going to make the team. You don’t pass math in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, you don’t go to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. So in some of these other things there’s not this repercussion if you don’t continue with our responsibilities. As a church it’s encouraged and we need you and we want you, but you are not going to be punished.

HF: Even among our most committed members the church seems to lose out just because of the responsibility that comes with the sports. Our leaders who say yes to this huge commitment to be there every Sunday for 4 years.....I would say they are among the most engaged and involved and committed people in the church. But even them, you get “I’m going to go ice fishing this weekend,” and they get pulled away. Our attendance would look totally different if grace was not an aspect of whether or not you came.

It’s kind of like church is like family. You are never going to get kicked out of your family. So I think church is taken for granted because you are always going to be glad if you are around and we are always going to welcome you back in. But what would it look like if it wasn’t that way, not that I want that, but I would be so curious if you treated church like you treated school or a sports team or a play. If attendance was that important what would that look like?

In summary, the initiation ritual at Alexandria Community Church yielded an approximate 25% retention rate in the year following the completion of the ritual and about 2% by the time the seniors graduated from high school and moved on to different contexts related to school and work. In addition, parents seemed busy, had a high degree of mobility, focused on their individualized sense of choice, and did not generally seem interested in



regular participation in the church. This qualitative data from ACC was quite similar to that which the confirmation directors in the Catholic churches described and thus points to a broader social trend instead of a localized phenomenon.

With this comparative foundation in place, I then sought further data to corroborate the patterns observed within Catholic initiation. In so doing, I gained further evidence from additional Protestant churches in the surrounding area, conducted interviews in two rural Catholic churches, and held a survey of university students. These three sources offered additional evidence that initiation is not specific to Catholic churches in the western Minneapolis suburbs. The details of my interactions in each of the three settings are briefly outlined over three sections below.

### ***Evidence from Interviews in Additional Protestant Churches***

After the more extensive experience in ACC, I continued comparative work with selective interviews in Protestant churches in the western suburbs of Minneapolis. Minneapolis is home to over twenty-five different Protestant denominations, several of which do not offer formal initiation processes for their youth such as Baptist, Christian Missionary Alliance, Pentecostal, and Evangelical Free.<sup>320</sup> The main Protestant denominations offering initiation include Lutheran, United Church of Christ, Methodist, Congregational, and Episcopal churches. I conducted interviews in four such churches choosing a cross section of denominations and ranging in size from 500 to 2,000 attendees. Each confirmation program took place when adolescents were fifteen to sixteen years old and initiated the youth into full membership in the church.

In each church, the confirmation directors made similar observations about culture, attrition, and the ritual process as Greg and Heather of ACC: long quotes from the 30-60

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<sup>320</sup> “Hennepin County, Minnesota (MN) Religion Statistics Profile – Minneapolis, Bloomington, Brooklyn Park, Plymouth, Eden Prairie,” <http://www.city-data.com/county/religion/Hennepin-County-MN.html>.

minutes interviews would be redundant. For example, the confirmation director in *Bethesda Methodist Church* said “in the wealthy demographic you are looked down upon if you don’t leave for awhile, do new things, be an individual. The changes of the last thirty years in society (related to mobility) have altered community.” A pastor in *Lutheran Redemption Church* reported “parents treat their children as idols and sports are everywhere. I know 2-3 families come to our Saturday night service because they have sports on Sundays.” A third director in *Midway Church of Christ* stated confirmation is “just a cultural norm that the parents can check off and get out of the way. It’s the one initiation rite where it’s the end and not the beginning. It’s unthinkable not to do it, but I don’t really know why we do it.” The director in *Ascension Lutheran Church* tried to organize “home church” settings post-initiation for youth to gather outside of the church context, yet only 25% of possible initiates came to such gatherings, and these groups ended as soon as the initiates graduated.

In each of the above traditions, a pattern of attrition was evident and related to broader social factors. In no context was there disconfirming evidence in which a church maintained vibrant and ongoing contact with initiates ranging in age from 18-30. The churches mostly consisted of parents with young families as well as a substantial older population. This data is consistent with, as we shall see, the quantitative evidence of the Cara Research Group which demonstrates growing rates of attrition in each of the past four generations. This qualitative evidence from the Protestant churches here points to this growing attrition as the result of broader social factors beyond just that of the Catholic context in the western suburbs, and gives the dissertation a degree of etic application.

### *Evidence from Interviews with Priests in Rural Catholic Parishes*

This information was helpful, but in an effort to gain further evidence and support related to this question of locality, I also decided to contact churches in rural settings outside the western suburbs of Minneapolis to determine if a self-contained smaller town may have less mobility and choice and therefore yield less attrition. My hope was to find evidence that provided a contrast to the current point. When interviewing Bishop Parsons, I asked who I might contact in rural parishes outside of the Minneapolis area. He suggested traveling first to the rural community of Fairbanks, approximately sixty miles south of Minneapolis to interview Father Finnegan of St. Joseph's Catholic Church. He then gave me the name of a younger priest in Sauk Rapids, MN about forty miles from Fairbanks.

Unlike the sprawling suburbs in which boundary lines of the cities blend together and, as stated in the introduction, individuals commonly drive twenty or more miles through several cities for their jobs, shopping, and destination restaurants, Fairbanks is more self-contained and separated from other small towns by miles of farmland. As such, I assumed people commonly work, shop, and eat within its boundaries. Additionally, it is much smaller than most suburban cities as it has just under 15,000 people, or one-third of the average population of the six cities in the western suburbs that participated in the fieldwork. Thus I expected people would tend to "know each other" and there would be more overlap in relationships among the churches, schools, athletics, and other social spheres. This form of social organization may then result in less attrition in the church as people are more interconnected and feel the social pressure to attend on Sundays.

When I met with Father Finnegan, however, he informed me attrition indeed occurred at a high rate throughout his tenure in the church. He cited similar reasons to that of the confirmation directors in the Minneapolis suburbs – particularly referring to the driver's license where the difference in church participation between a "September (birthday) 10<sup>th</sup>

grader and a May (birthday) 10<sup>th</sup> grader is millions of miles.” Father Finnegan explained this by stating youth typically get their driver’s license in 10<sup>th</sup> grade when they turn sixteen years old. If their birthday falls early in the academic and church year, which begins in September, they are more likely to miss confirmation altogether. If they can’t drive until May, they will more likely attend confirmation. Father Finnegan then said being able to drive is the “single most significant event in our culture before the age of eighteen, and has been for fifty years.” It gives the youth freedom and mobility they did not have before, and apparently the youth were willing to drive outside of town many miles in exploring their freedom.

Father Finnegan then noted cultural dimensions specific to Fairbanks that also contributed to the high rates of attrition. In commenting on social relationships in the city, he mentioned the local high school was the hub of the majority of community life for the youth and their families. The school creates significant relational opportunities based on personal affinity such as athletics, band, music, art, and other extra-curricular activities. The youth spend the majority of their time in this context, as do their families. He observed,

High school is the locus of their community. Everything revolves around that community and it’s hard to be in two communities. But the high school is not the parish and how do you help that? And that’s really where we need to do better because the high school ends on the day they graduate. It’s done and it’s so done and I am out of here. But the parents have to exert so much money, time, effort, volunteer work so it really becomes their community. All that is wonderful and builds a strong sense of bonding and connectedness and all of that is great. But it’s not the parish.

Based on his observations, Father Finnegan indicated he felt a significant competitive pressure from the local high school for the attention of the youth. He saw an opportunity to gain their attention since high school has a finite ending point and the initiates could look to the church as a long-term relational hub for this self-contained community. Yet this proves not to be the case as the majority of initiates actually leave Fairbanks when they graduate

from high school to establish themselves in other cities and towns. Fairbanks's population has declined by 25% over the past thirty years and continues to lose people to other cities.

Individuals regularly migrate from rural towns to large cities since large families are no longer needed to care for the farm. One or two of the children may stay to keep the farm on, but the remaining ones move elsewhere for jobs. Thus, though the specific motivations underlying the mobility and choice appears somewhat different when compared to the suburban context of Minneapolis, Fairbanks still experienced high rates of initiate attrition for many of the same reasons.

After interviewing Father Finnegan, I traveled forty miles west to the much smaller town of Sauk Rapids in the middle of southern Minnesota. This area of the state consists primarily of farms and open fields with the occasional town centre – most of which contain a population of less than 300 people. I went this direction because Bishop Parsons suggested I contact Father Chris of Divine Mercy to gain his perspective on initiation as well. Sauk Rapids has a population of just over 1,000 people and, in contrast to Fairbanks, does not have a local high school in the town. The church was the primary relational institution in the city limits as the only other buildings included a grocery store, bar, and gasoline station. This being the case, it seemed reasonable to think the church could form a relational hub in this context since there were no competing opportunities. However, as with Fairbanks, this proved not to be the case.

Father Chris informed me Sauk Rapids was primarily a “bedroom community” for people who worked in Minneapolis and didn't mind driving forty-five minutes each direction to the city. They made this choice primarily because housing in Sauk Rapids is considerably less expensive than that of the major metropolitan areas. As a result, the community was basically empty during the week as people worked in their jobs, and on weekends as people spent time with friends in the other cities in which they worked. In addition, there were no

active youth or youth program in the church. Contrary to my assumptions about “small-town life” in which everyone is inter-connected, Sauk Rapids was a functional “ghost-town” and the rates of attrition were irrelevant since few people attended the church. The interview was quite short as there was little to discuss beyond this. Thus, instead of offering differentiated, contrasting evidence, both rural parishes further supported the dissonance of initiate attrition in the church due to sociological factors that though manifested differently, still related to agency and mobility. This is not to deny that there may be villages and small towns which do retain youngsters after confirmation, but their whereabouts is unknown to both the church and this researcher.

### ***Evidence from University Survey Results***

Finally, as stated last chapter, I conducted a survey in a local Catholic university in which the demographics of those participating approximate that of the western suburbs of Minneapolis in terms of wealth and ethnicity. However, a legitimate methodological question related to etic application results from the fact that the exact cities and income status from which the students came remained unknown due to privacy concerns. The comparative sample may not be substantially different from those studied in the fieldwork, and it is, in fact, possible the majority of survey respondents came from the western suburbs of Minneapolis. If this were the case, their responses would be somewhat redundant in terms of the magnitude of the attrition beyond the fieldwork context. Therefore, before the general results of the open-ended question are discussed, this issue needs to be addressed.

While it is important to note there cannot be certainty in terms of cities of origin among survey respondents, an educated observation can be made based on comparing confirmation class sizes among respondents with class sizes in the fieldwork. The respondents indicated their confirmation class enrollment ranged from two initiates to three hundred initiates with the average class consisting of forty-five. By comparison, the initiation

classes in Minneapolis ranged from forty on the low end to one hundred fifty on the high end with an average of approximately eight-five initiates. Therefore, while some survey respondents came from larger contexts that may have included those parishes in the fieldwork, the majority came from cities skewed towards smaller population bases than those in the western suburbs of Minneapolis. This suggests a number of survey respondents came from contexts outside the western suburbs of Minneapolis.

That said, three patterns emerged from the survey which mirrored the data of the interviews conducted in the fieldwork. Firstly, forty-five of the fifty-six survey respondents reported that less than 25% of the initiates from their confirmation program participated in the same social spheres as them outside of church – including athletics, band, music, and art. Another six students reported less than 50% of the initiates participated in these same spheres. As we shall see next chapter, this suggests initiates function within an individualized social network in which they interact and relate across fragmented and disconnected relational spheres of their choice. They tend towards relationships across a variety of contexts, but those relationships do not interweave, nor are they connected by a central community into which one was initiated. This is indicative of a *Gesellschaft* community.

Secondly, thirty-six of the respondents reported they did not interact weekly with at least 50% of their fellow initiates in the year after their initiation, suggesting many did not regularly attend Mass following the initiation process. This statistic is confirmed by the quantitative research provided later in this chapter. Thirdly, and related to the aggregate numbers above, respondents qualitatively commented on their confirmation/initiation experience in an open-ended fashion. Their responses, a sampling of which is outlined in Figure One, trend significantly towards a negative experience. Of the twenty-eight students responding to this question only two reported a positive experience.

**FIGURE ONE: Qualitative Survey Response Sample**

**“Finally, please offer any general comments related to your experience of Confirmation.”**

“Confirmation at my parish was not the most enriching experience ever. There was little to no community, classes were mundane, the retreat was just a day-long at the parish.

“Fewer than half my classmates still believe in God. Much less still follow the faith. Few ever did.”

“Very inadequate. Everyone who was there didn’t really care. No one really understood what was going on, but the confirmands (and even their parents) could not have cared less whether or not they were confirmed. Meetings were inadequate, classes too large, nothing was personal.”

“I didn’t feel like I was really prepared for Confirmation. I didn’t understand the significance of it.”

“Religious Education programs in the suburbs are dying from lack of Spirit in the teachers.”

“I was confirmed in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and didn’t know or really care what it was about. I just did it because that’s what you did in 8<sup>th</sup> grade....I wish my parish hadn’t forced it upon me and that I would have received the Holy Spirit with the proper respect, reverence....”

“Confirmation experience for me was a life-changing one.”

“There wasn’t anything earth-shattering that happened. I never see...other confirmands today.”

“I think many people in the confirmation process didn’t understand what was going on.”

“I don’t think I understood the Catholic Church as well as I could have at my confirmation.”

“Half my confirmation class would show up high. There was a real lack of seriousness.”

“In my community, it seems that confirmation is just another sacrament to get done.”

“I don’t think that I really got a grasp on my faith through Confirmation.”

“I enjoyed it.”

“I barely remember my confirmation due to bad instruction.”

“My catechists were rarely prepared for class.”

“It seemed a chore at the time – I definitely had other places I wanted to be on Wednesday night.”

“My confirmation experience was inadequate because I only attended one short retreat. This was because I attended a religious school and was already more knowledgeable than my sponsors and classmates.”

“Some people saw confirmation as a graduation instead of an initiation....”



When combined with the observations of confirmation directors and pastors regarding high human agency and the competitive pressures they face, it seems logical that the attrition is somewhat explained by initiates leaving the context in which they perceive the experience to be negative for other contexts like sports, band, jobs, friends, etc. in which the experience is perceived as more positive. This does not mean attrition is inevitable for all respondents, nor does it mean that all those who reported negative experiences left the church. It simply provides another form of evidence related to a relevant, etic application for the central claim of this thesis.

### ***Attrition Is Part of a Broader Social Trend***

The evidence offered above suggests attrition in the Catholic churches of the western suburbs of Minneapolis is not simply localized behavior. It also indicates Catholic initiation is not inherently the problem as Protestant churches also experienced high rates of attrition post-initiation. Instead it seems broader societal forces are at play in the relationship between initiation expectations and social forces such as individualism, agency, and community organization. This interplay is more fully analyzed in the next chapter in an attempt to determine the primary cause of attrition and dissonance. Before moving to this analysis, the additional questions highlighted in the introduction need to be addressed: perhaps there is actually no dissonance as initiates may actually simply be attending other churches specific to their location; or, if they do leave, it is not a permanent attrition as they return later in life.

### **III. Long-Term Attrition: *Decline in Overall Religious Participation in America***

Catholic initiation, though expressed locally, initiates one into a worldwide community as the Catholic Church is constituted by the “universal group of Christian communities that is in communion with the Pope, the successor of Peter. (This church) was

established by Christ on the foundation of his Apostles.”<sup>321</sup> Therefore, when initiates complete the ritual process they are considered part of the invisible “spiritual community....a society of souls, having the profoundest and most vital relations with the invisible and eternal world; and (are) yet, at the same time (part of) an institution existing in the present world....”<sup>322</sup> Because this community consists of 1.1 billion Catholics spread over 250,000 churches worldwide, there may be no actual attrition or dissonance when they leave the parish of their initiation if they regularly attend church somewhere and stay actively involved.

An additional related dimension includes the possibility that even if they do leave the church after their initiation, this attrition is not permanent. For example, the disappearance could be constituted by a short period of time in their twenties before they eventually return to the church – remaining active for future years. This possible dimension became evident during the research process in which I spoke with an acquaintance who was married and approximately thirty-five years old. She came from an Irish-Catholic background but had not been active in the church over the past twenty years. However, when she and her husband had their first child, she discussed getting involved in a church community for the sake of their new daughter. They did, in fact, have her baptized in the Catholic Church shortly after her birth, though I do not know if they continued participating in the church thereafter on an ongoing basis.

This anecdotal report, though not associated with the fieldwork, was similar to what two initiation directors reported in the fieldwork. They stated initiates tend to disappear for many years after their initiation, leaving a large demographical gap in church attendance among people in their twenties. Some do return for regular church attendance in their thirties

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<sup>321</sup> Thomas Zanzig and Maura Thompson Hagarty, *Confirmed in a Faithful Community: Candidates Handbook* (Winona: St. Mary's Press, 2006), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=92g994DQ9CgC&pg=frontcover&dq=\(This+church\)+was+established+by+Christ+on+the+foundation+of+his+Apostles+zanzig&hl=en&ei=ucL6TaXCEsyu0AGd5snVAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&sqi=2&ved=0CDoQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=92g994DQ9CgC&pg=frontcover&dq=(This+church)+was+established+by+Christ+on+the+foundation+of+his+Apostles+zanzig&hl=en&ei=ucL6TaXCEsyu0AGd5snVAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&sqi=2&ved=0CDoQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false), 136.

<sup>322</sup> Gregory, *Holy Catholic Church*, 13.

and forties with their families for the initiation process. Beth Gardson noticed a slight attendance and participation bulge at St. Augustine's for youth and families around their first communion and then a significant bulge during the years of confirmation. If these parents of the children then stay active in the church after their children are initiated – even if their children do leave – there is no permanent dissonance since the parents eventually returned for regular attendance and participation. This does not necessarily render the thesis claim false, but it does greatly weaken it in that the dissonance is only temporary.

These two possible objections need to be addressed. However, the qualitative work in the field does not yield the necessary information because of the limitations in terms of number of informants and length of time studied. Additionally, the central interviews were conducted among confirmation directors in churches with thousands of attendees, and they did not follow up to see who returns to the church, nor were they aware whether initiates regularly attended church in other cities. As a result, further and widespread fieldwork in a diversity of locations, as well a lengthy longitudinal study is needed to make firm qualitative assertions regarding whether initiates are disappearing from their parishes only to attend other churches or to return later in life, or if they are disappearing altogether. Such extensive fieldwork is obviously beyond the scope of this dissertation; yet in its absence these possible objections still need to be addressed.

To do so, it is helpful to point to recent quantitative research studies related to general mass attendance and church participation trends in America as well as to anecdotal media articles describing current challenges to American church participation. The quantitative data is derived from large studies conducted by both the CARA Research Group and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life which point to a pattern of initiates commonly disappearing from the church with fewer returning – even as their children come to the traditional age of initiation. The anecdotal media evidence is derived from articles written in

newspapers and magazines also pointing to an overall decline in Catholic religious participation. These various sources are outlined below and corroborate a pattern of attrition in which initiates are leaving on a more permanent basis. And while this data is presented in the context of these issues, it further demonstrates etic application as the fieldwork data connects to broader cultural trends.

### ***Quantitative Studies Related to Initiate Attrition***

#### **The CARA Research Group: Decreasing Mass Attendance and Participation.**

##### *Mass Attendance*

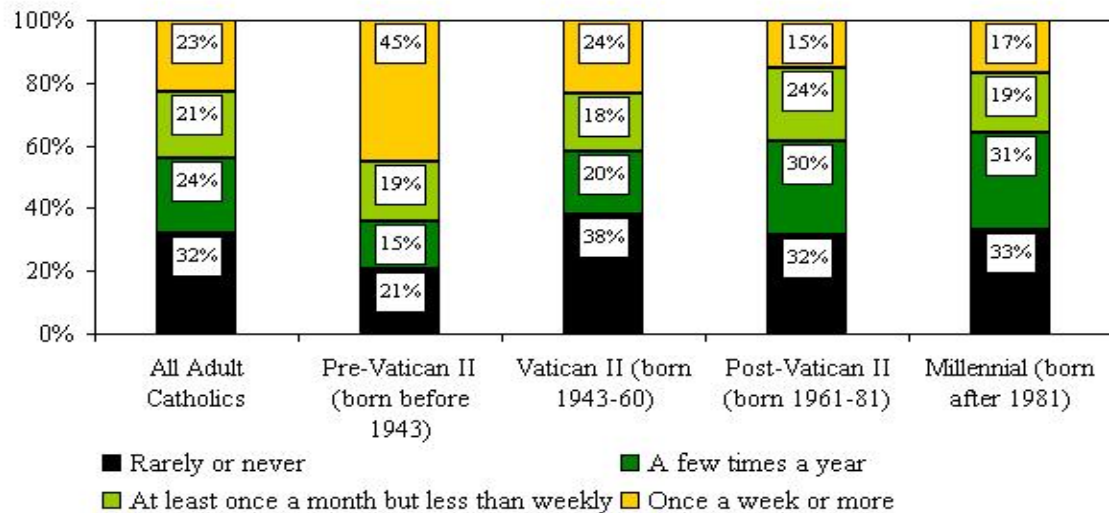
CARA, a research center founded in 1964 and affiliated with Georgetown University in Washington D.C, identifies its primary vision as conducting “social scientific studies about the Catholic Church.”<sup>323</sup> The center regularly studies issues of church attendance and retention, and compares consistency of beliefs between official theological statements and the views and practices of the parishioner. In 2007, CARA conducted an extensive comparative survey of average weekly church attendance across the four most recent generations. They asked a broad sample of parishioners how often, besides weddings and funerals, they attended mass, an important metric for measuring attrition since, as stated in the introduction, the decree of the church requires weekly mass attendance.<sup>324</sup> The results of their survey are provided in the graph below.

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<sup>323</sup> “The CARA Vision,” <http://cara.georgetown.edu/AboutCARA/aboutCARA.html>.

<sup>324</sup> A complete methodology for the survey can be found at: <http://cara.georgetown.edu/CARAServices/FRStats/dembackg.pdf>.

*Aside from weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend Mass?*  
Percentage responding as such among all adult Catholics and by generation



Six response categories are combined to create four attendance frequencies

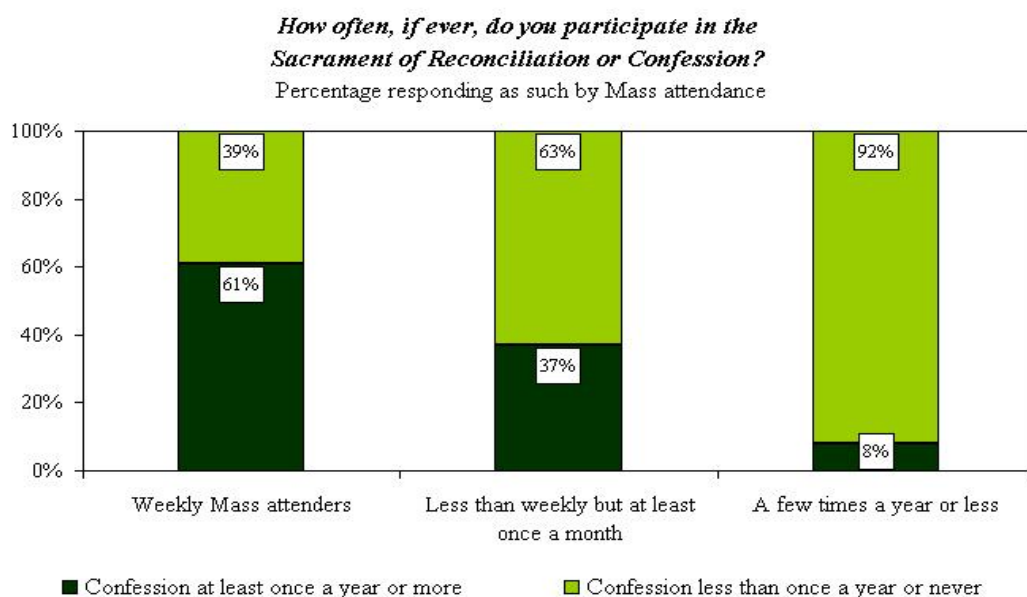
An analysis of the chart reveals a decreasing trend of regular and ongoing church attendance over the past four generations. Though there was a slight increase in weekly church attendance from 15% to 17% between the two most recent generations, there was also an increase in permanent attrition as those who attend just a few times a year, if at all, rose from 62% to 64%. Overall, fewer Catholic people attend church somewhat regularly (at least once a month) with each succeeding generation, going from 64% to 42% to 39% to 36%. But even here, the majority of these initiates are not fulfilling the church expectations by attending every week.

In addition to the data above, a separate survey in which CARA asked 1,007 people questions regarding their sacramental participation provides more details on the attrition. 84% of the respondents stated they completed the full initiation process, ending with confirmation, yet the aggregate data from the graph above shows 23% of all Catholic people attend mass on a weekly basis. This means that if the same 1007 people were surveyed, it could be expected only 231 of them attend weekly mass out of a possible 841 that completed the initiation – 73% of all initiates fail to attend mass on a weekly basis. The numbers are even higher for

those who, at the time of the survey, would be in their thirties and forties and more likely to have teenagers in confirmation. Of these generations, 81% do not attend mass on a regular basis – a statistic which contradicts the notion that initiates return to the church for mass attendance in large numbers and on a regular basis when their children are of the age of initiation.

### *Sacrament of Reconciliation*

An second metric measuring attrition and participation relates to the Sacrament of Reconciliation as parishioners are expected to confess their sins to the priest at least once a year. The following graph shows the majority of Catholic people do not fulfill this requirement. Among those who do not regularly attend mass, 92% of them also do not attend confession on an annual basis. Among those who attend mass at least once a month, 63% do not go to confession once a year. Even 39% of those who do attend weekly do not go to confession. This, like the mass attendance statistics, suggests rates of attrition related to ongoing participation run quite high post-initiation, and that initiates are not actively involved in other churches or returning in significant numbers when they have families.



### *Further Modes of Participation*

One final survey from CARA, conducted in 2008, asked respondents about their general activities in the parish and religious activities other than mass attendance. The survey represents an extensive look at a number of different kinds of participation that directly correlate to expectations of incorporation within a common definition of initiation. Firstly, on a general basis, 7% of Catholics in 2001 described themselves as “very involved” while just 4% described themselves this way by 2008. In addition, 51% said they were “not involved at all” in 2001 while 64% chose this description for themselves in 2008.<sup>325</sup> These numbers indicate general trends in declining participation within the church over just the past seven years. Secondly, in terms of specific behaviors, 45% of Catholics said they received ashes on Ash Wednesday. 38% indicated they give up something other than meat on Fridays for Lent. 41% said they do not have any religious imagery depicting Jesus or the Virgin Mary in their homes, and only 8% said they pray the rosary at least once a week.<sup>326</sup> Thus less than half of all Catholics participate in some of the normative behaviors expected of those who are actively involved.

The CARA reports on these behaviors, when combined with the self-reports of “little involvement” and the statistics related to attendance at mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, indicate initiates are not just disappearing from the parish of their initiation while attending church in a different location. They seem to be minimally involved with the church post-initiation. This macro information verifies the microsmic fieldwork data that suggests a dissonance in the initiation process. This is further corroborated with additional survey evidence from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life as described in the next section.

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<sup>325</sup> “Religious Devotions and Practices,” <http://cara.georgetown.edu/devotionpractice.pdf>, 81.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

### ***The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life: Changing Religious Affiliations***

Based on more than 35,000 interviews with American adults, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “details the religious make-up, religious beliefs and practices as well as social and political attitudes of the American public.”<sup>327</sup> One section of their interviews focused on overall rates of attrition within the Catholic Church in America. Before presenting this data, however, it should be again made clear here that decline in religious affiliation, as stated in the introduction, is evident across nearly all American churches, and many Protestant denominations are also experiencing significant attrition. Thus attrition is not unique to the Catholic Church. The Pew Research survey showed the Baptist church lost 3.7% of its membership and the Methodist church declined by 2.1% during this same time.<sup>328</sup> The general trend in American Protestantism demonstrates decline as well.

The survey then went on to indicate the Catholic Church in America experienced a high degree of “net loss” in terms of overall religious membership in that 31% of all Americans in the survey were raised Catholic a generation ago while 24% of Americans now report being Catholic. These losses would have been “more pronounced were it not for the offsetting impact of immigration” in which a disproportionate number of new United States citizens come from Catholic-based Latino cultures.<sup>329</sup> These immigrants tend to maintain Catholic religious affiliation upon immigration, and without this influx of “new” Catholic Americans, the rates of attrition would have been considerably more substantial.

In addition, when asked for the motivations behind their change of affiliation, only 4% of Catholics say it was the result of marriage, family, or relocation to a new community. By contrast, 42% of those raised Catholic said they just do not believe in God or most

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<sup>327</sup> <http://religions.pewforum.org/>.

<sup>328</sup> “Changes in Americans’ Religious Affiliation,” <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-chapter-2.pdf>, 24.

<sup>329</sup> “Religious Affiliations,” <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>.



religious teachings, and 33% they “just have not found the right religion for them.”<sup>330</sup> Of these, a significant percentage (56%) stated their beliefs on homosexuality and abortion were inconsistent with those of the church, and, to a lesser extent, deviated on other teachings such as treatment of women, divorce, and birth control.<sup>331</sup> This quantitative data indicates initiates are not leaving their parishes due to mobility or relocation, but rather leaving the church on a more permanent basis because of the more substantial issues as conflict in teachings, “drifting away from the faith,” or exploring other alternative religions.<sup>332</sup>

These quantitative studies provide helpful data points for this qualitative research. Quantitative researchers identify “truth” as a “matter of internal validity and the degree of isomorphism between the data and an independently existing reality that the data reflect.”<sup>333</sup> Qualitative research, on the other hand, argues truth is a construction of the mind and becomes somewhat more of a reality when located in time and place.<sup>334</sup> Therefore, this quantitative data contributes to the “truth” of the dissonance in the initiation process through a different methodological and epistemological paradigm. It seems there is an independent existing reality of increasingly permanent attrition that is also, according to the fieldwork, woven into the experiences among those in the given context of the western suburbs of Minneapolis. The etic is verified by the emic, and vice-versa.

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<sup>330</sup> “Entering and Leaving the Ranks of the Unaffiliated,”

[http://pewforum.org/uploadedfiles/Orphan\\_Migrated\\_Content/Unaffiliated.pdf](http://pewforum.org/uploadedfiles/Orphan_Migrated_Content/Unaffiliated.pdf), 12.

<sup>331</sup> “Faith in Flux,” <http://pewforum.org/Faith-in-Flux%283%29.aspx>.

<sup>332</sup> “Faith in Flux: Event Transcript,” 27 April 2009, <http://pewforum.org/Faith-in-Flux-Changes-in-Religious-Affiliation-in-the-US.aspx>.

<sup>333</sup> Karin Klenke, *Qualitative Research in the Study of Leadership* (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing House, 2008), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=bvtY7TvU3sEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Qualitative+Research+in+the+Study+of+Leadership&hl=en&ei=ssT6TfPJOKTd0QGx5dzkAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=bvtY7TvU3sEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Qualitative+Research+in+the+Study+of+Leadership&hl=en&ei=ssT6TfPJOKTd0QGx5dzkAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 45.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

## **A. Anecdotal Evidence Related to Initiate Attrition**

### *Closing of Parochial Schools*

In addition to the quantitative studies associated with attrition in the Catholic Church, media articles, blogs, and websites commonly discuss the decline in attendance and participation across broad sections of the United States.<sup>335</sup> This is particularly evident, for example, in the widespread closing of Catholic elementary schools over the past year. Bishop Guilfoyle Regional Catholic School, serving six parishes in New Jersey, was forced to close in January of 2010 with a \$400,000 budget deficit due to enrollment numbers that fell from 373 students in 2002 to just 111 students in 2010.<sup>336</sup> A general “decline in religious practice” when combined with population declines were cited as the main reasons for the closure. St. Elizabeth’s Catholic School in San Francisco closed in March of 2010 as the arch-diocese stated it was “facing declining enrollment and growing debt.”<sup>337</sup> Despite the formation of a specific task force, “They just weren’t able to get families to come into the school in sufficient numbers.....I don’t think there was anything that wasn’t tried.”<sup>338</sup> Archbishop Carlson in Missouri wrote a blog on 3 September, 2010, in which he urged, “We must keep our schools growing.”<sup>339</sup> Calling the challenges “enormous” and the demographics “against us”, Carlson offered a three-point plan to make schools “alive in Christ, proactively recruit, and offer assistance to those in financial need.”<sup>340</sup> This is necessary, he argues, in order for a

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<sup>335</sup> The following examples represent school closings and challenges in the eastern, western, and midwestern United States as a way of demonstrating the widespread nature of the issue.

<sup>336</sup> “Declining Enrollment Forces Closure of Bishop Guilfoyle Elementary School,” 21 January 2010, [http://www.camdendiocese.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1510:declining-enrollment-forces-closure-of-bishop-guilfoyle-elementary-school&Itemid=1203](http://www.camdendiocese.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1510:declining-enrollment-forces-closure-of-bishop-guilfoyle-elementary-school&Itemid=1203).

<sup>337</sup> Rick Delvecchio, “St. Elizabeth’s to Close,” *Catholic San Francisco*, 5 March 2010, <http://www.sfarchdiocese.org/about-us/news/2010/St.-Elizabeth-School-to-close-2067/>. St Elizabeth’s reported the primary cause of declining enrollment related to people moving out of the community.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> “Archbishop Carlson: We Must Keep our Catholic Schools Growing,” 3 September 2010, <http://archstl.org/archstl/post/archbishop-carlson-we-must-keep-our>.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

Catholic school to “remain viable.”<sup>341</sup> Clearly, the “feeder system” bringing children into the church through the medium of education is on the decline in these situations.

### *Engaging Parishioners in the Culture*

On 11 June, 2010 the Detroit Free Press published an article titled, “As Growing Numbers Leave, the Arch-Diocese of Detroit Tries to Keep Young People in its Flock.”<sup>342</sup> Unorthodox approaches to retain people in their twenties and thirties have led the churches to hold fireworks displays, give people tickets to professional baseball games, hold camping trips, and conduct meetings on faith matters in local drinking establishments. The churches acknowledge they are trying to create environments where “those not comfortable in church” can “ask questions without being judged.” The main motivations relates to recognizing assumptions about young Catholics coming back after drifting away for a few years were incorrect. “There used to be an attitude of, ‘Oh, they’ll always come back when they get married,’ but that’s just not the case.” Thus, programs like Theology on Tap attempt to bring young Catholics together in informal settings. Even with such efforts reaching some, “it’s not really dealing with the hemorrhaging going on in the church.”<sup>343</sup>

### *Church Reorganization*

One final anecdotal piece of media evidence relates to the recent and quite substantial reorganization of the Catholic Church in the Minneapolis area. On 17, October 2010 the local newspaper published a report describing how the church was eliminating twenty-one parishes and merging their members into fourteen others.<sup>344</sup> One parishioner-member for the past fifty-five years commented that the masses “used to be packed” but now there are too many

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Narij Warikoo, “As Growing Numbers Leave, the Archdiocese of Detroit Tries to Keep Young People in the Flock,” *The Detroit Free Press*, 11 July 2010, <http://www.freep.com/article/20100711/NEWS05/7110421/As-growing-numbers-leave-the-Archdiocese-of-Detroit-tries-to-keep-young-people-in-the-flock>.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Rose French, “Catholic Church Reorganization Plan Draws Anger, Sorrow,” *Star Tribune*, 17 October 2010, <http://www.startribune.com/lifestyle/faith/105108919.html>.

different churches around – implying that people have many more options than they have in the past. Therefore, amidst declining attendance trends in general, churches are fighting to stay alive because of both competition and attrition. If it were not for the increase in immigration in the Minneapolis area, many more churches would have had to close as long-time community families are migrating away from the organized church. Even so, the Archdiocese could no longer sustain the costs of twenty-one of the parish buildings, and was forced to close them and reorganize their systems.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The chapter began by asking two analytical questions of the research. Firstly, did the thesis claim have etic application or is it more of a localized phenomenon? The subsequent field research conducted in the various Protestant churches and the rural Catholic parishes, as well as the responses from the university survey, indicated a widespread issue of attrition extending beyond the immediate context of the western suburbs of Minneapolis. Secondly, given the Catholic notion that initiation is into the “church universal,” is there actually attrition since initiates could be attending other churches? Additionally, even were there some measure of attrition, is it permanent given the fact they return to the churches when they get married and have children? The quantitative research studies outlined above, in conjunction with anecdotal media reports, indicate the attrition is indeed real and, in many cases, seems to be permanent. Thus the thesis claim does have an etic application and the legitimacy of the pattern of dissonance is corroborated in a growing percentage of permanent attrition.

With these questions answered, the central theoretical claim of the dissertation has now been outlined in these first six chapters where a historical pattern of dissonance in Catholic initiation (outlined in chapter one) persists into the current context due to a lack of incorporation in initiation (a common expectation as outlined in chapter two). What has not been addressed to this point, however, is the possible evolution dimension of initiation in the

Minneapolis parishes and contexts which are similar. Chapter one outlined past evolutions in initiation, and revealed some of the evolutions that occurred amidst a specific form of dissonance. Based on this precedent, and the fact that tension in dissonance is commonly lessened as the situation evolves, attention needs to be given to the evolution of initiation in the Minneapolis context. This subject comprises the seventh, and final chapter, where the data of the fieldwork is analyzed in an attempt to see hints of a possible evolution. In this way, the thesis comes full circle in connecting the present situation with the various localized expressions of the Catholic Church throughout its long history.

### **SECTION THREE**

#### ***Sociological Dynamics and Evolution of Initiation in the Minneapolis Context***

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Gesellschaft, Empowerment and the Individualization of the Initiation Process*

#### **I. Introduction**

The evolution discussed in the final pages of this chapter is somewhat predictive in nature. This is primarily due to the fact the evolution is still ongoing and we do not have the full perspective of history by which to determine how the present pattern of church attrition ultimately affects the initiation process. However, as ritual evolution is part of the ongoing historical pattern, the subject must still be addressed, even if only tentatively, in order to bring the dissertation full circle by connecting the present with the past. There are obvious epistemological dangers in offering an analysis when the evolution is not yet fully realized, but the attempt in this chapter to note what seems to be part of ritual change is not purely speculative as hints of it do exist.

As we shall see, evolution in initiation in Minneapolis and similar contexts, though early in its process, appears to relate to how the institution is increasingly offering to support the individual's faith journey by shaping the initiation process to meet the needs of each individual. The community emphasis is still clearly present, but a subtle shift seems to be occurring in which "becoming part of the Catholic community" is not so much in the forefront of the initiation process; rather it is secondary to making sure the individual experience some form of self-actualization or self-fulfillment. This can be observed in both the language of localized programs of initiation as well as the reports of the confirmation directors. Bill Sanford, for example, emphasized "being creative in what you are offering" and provided a variety of contexts in an attempt to meet the various needs of the individuals. He "let them choose their topics" in post-initiation programs as a method of drawing them back into the church. For Bill's parish (and for other contexts as we shall see) the rituals seem to be evolving away from emphasizing the fact that an initiate is joining a universal

community in which their identity comes in alignment with that of the community, and towards and individualization of the process.

This potential evolution makes sense in light of the probable reasons by which the dissonance seems to have originally developed. As outlined in the previous chapters, the evidence from the confirmation directors, additional informants, and the university survey attributed attrition to sociological factors such as fragmented communities, empowered agency, competition for attention from other social spheres, and the emphasis on individualized faith journeys. The synthesis of this evidence paints a picture in which the initiate, greatly empowered by personal choice and living among fragmented social contexts, seems to be usurping the power of the institution. As a result, the institution seems to be acquiescing to the power of the individual in an attempt to gain their attention by offering to meet their needs. Initiation is thus being “marketed” in some places as a means to help the person along their way in their faith journey – over-and-above inviting them into a universal community with local expression. Maxwell Johnson writes:

Especially in an American context of individualism, with its focus on self-actualization, and an understanding of a life based on a system of achievement and reward, even the grace-filled sacraments of Christian initiation can become interpreted in a rather Pelagian manner, that is, viewed as particular rewards received by individuals as a result of their so-called “free choice.....”<sup>345</sup>

In light of this, the majority of this chapter expands on the sociological factors highlighted in the previous chapters in order to connect them to a possible trend in initiation towards individualization. For example, understanding the organization and structure of a community, as identified by Bishop Parsons, is important for illuminating why initiates are not regularly part of a tight-knit community. Likewise, the high empowerment of individuals to make and realize personal choices, as mentioned by Patrick Collins when initiates receive

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<sup>345</sup> Johnson, *Rites*, 464.



their driver's license, reduces the power of the institution to control one's behavior.<sup>346</sup>

Attention is therefore focused on discussing abstract concepts of community, agency, empowerment, and individualized networks while connecting them to the concrete data of the fieldwork. This discussion forms the majority of the chapter as these factors both further illuminate the theoretical contribution of dissonance in the Minneapolis context, and, more importantly for this chapter, help explain what appears to be an emerging evolution in Catholic initiation among these churches.

## **II. Sociological Factors Contributing to the Evolution of Initiation**

### **A. Illustrations of Ezike and Alex**

As a way of introducing the primary sociological dynamics, two fictional examples based are illustrated below. These examples provide a contrast between two very different social environments in order to highlight the role various dynamics play in the implementation and evolution of an initiation ritual. The first example, taken from research among anthropologists in one of the Igbo tribes of Nigeria, illustrates the collective nature of community that contains a tight network of relationships and relative lack of true choice. This kind of context may more easily facilitate an initiation process that eventuates in ongoing relationships. The second example, derived from descriptions of confirmands in the field research, shows a more individualized community characterized by a loose network of relationships and the considerable degree of empowered choice. This creates an initiation process less likely to eventuate in ongoing relationships. The second example also provides an ongoing archetype of the actual confirmands and creates a lens through which to view the more abstract sociological concepts of community, agency, empowerment, and relational networks.

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<sup>346</sup> There are undoubtedly many reasons why initiates leave the church following their initiation process that are not documented in this chapter – including theological dissonance, pain from past relational experiences in the church, disillusionment with leadership, etc. However, this dissertation is focused only on that reported in the fieldwork in terms of the primary reasons for the dissonance.

## ***“Ezike” and Igbo Initiation in Southern Nigeria***

Ezike completed his initiation among one of the Igbo tribes of southern Nigeria.<sup>347</sup> He participated in the ritual process with several young men in his age group, all of whom are now expected to serve consecutive roles of defense, governance, and elder in their society over the course of their lifetimes.<sup>348</sup> Taking these roles is “not voluntary” but rather among the expected norms of his culture. If Ezike ignores these positions or otherwise deviates from societal norms, he risks discipline and possible ex-communication.<sup>349</sup>

This strict social control of Ezike’s relational life is derived from the long-standing traditions of his localized context. The meta-narrative of the tribe includes a belief in a sacred realm in which even mundane daily events are rife with symbolic reality and infused with the sacred as they “give meaning to the human condition.”<sup>350</sup> This sacrilization is most commonly revealed in the interactions with the deceased ancestors of the tribe who still intervene in the affairs of the living. Seen as the guardians of goodwill, blessing, health, shelter, and sustenance, the dead ancestors are appeased through the continual upholding of sacred tribal traditions, myths, rituals and roles such as those now expected of Ezike and his

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<sup>347</sup> Ezike’s name is fictional and was pulled from the article in which life among the Igbo tribes and their initiation practices are described.

<sup>348</sup> Timothy Reagan, *Non-Western Education Traditions; Indigenous Approaches to Educational Thought and Practice* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 2000), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=10qYJTeN6NAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Non-Western+Education+Traditions;+Indigenous+Approaches+to+Educational+Thought+and+Practice&hl=en&ei=9cf6TY-xJ8ft0gHGxGZAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCwQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Non-Western%20Education%20Traditions%3B%20Indigenous%20Approaches%20to%20Educational%20Thought%20and%20Practice&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=10qYJTeN6NAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Non-Western+Education+Traditions;+Indigenous+Approaches+to+Educational+Thought+and+Practice&hl=en&ei=9cf6TY-xJ8ft0gHGxGZAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCwQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Non-Western%20Education%20Traditions%3B%20Indigenous%20Approaches%20to%20Educational%20Thought%20and%20Practice&f=false), 72.

<sup>349</sup> As part of the research process, I participated in a lunch with a Nigerian student who described his life and his initiation in this kind of context. To be uninitiated was to be the target of mockery and ridicule as well as a being disowned by one’s family. In his context, similar to the fictional one above, he would not have even been able to participate in normal economic and social life if he did not accept his locally prescribed role exemplified in ritual action.

<sup>350</sup> John K. Olupona and Sulayman S. Nyang, “Introduction: Issues and Perspectives on Religious Plurality in Africa,” in *Religious Plurality in Africa*, ed. John K. Olupona and Sulayman S. Nyang (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Company, 1993), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=Fg3wuR95hk8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Religious+Plurality+in+Africa&hl=en&ei=U8j6TZPrLaus0AHtvc2EAW&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Fg3wuR95hk8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Religious+Plurality+in+Africa&hl=en&ei=U8j6TZPrLaus0AHtvc2EAW&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 21.

fellow initiates. Ezike therefore puts the wellness of the entire community in jeopardy should he deviate from group expectations.

Because group health is dependent upon the conformity of its members in the way, the social group is tightly-knit. The decisions Ezike makes in one social sphere, and how he there relates to the sacred, is perceived to affect the other spheres of his life. In others words, if Ezike chooses to dishonor sacred ancestors in his financial sphere, he then puts his family sphere at risk of losing the goodwill necessary to health and survival even though they may not work in the same location. Likewise, if Ezike stopped participating in religious rituals, he would likely find it difficult to conduct business with fellow members of the tribe as they would not risk associating themselves with a “heathen.” Ezike’s personal agency is restricted and he is likely to stay in relationship following his initiation unless he can be sure of independent survival *throughout* his life. In this case, the ideology of initiation engendering ongoing and *connected* relationships is relatively consistent with the practice on the local level.

### ***“Alex” and Catholic Initiation in the Minneapolis Suburban Context***

It is the end of Alex’s second year of Confirmation at St. Bernard’s Catholic Church in the western suburbs of Minneapolis. Alex has dutifully attended most of the 90-minute Wednesday night sessions, missing only for the occasional athletic event, illness, or vacation at his family’s cabin. During this two-year journey Alex has otherwise fulfilled all requirements expected of a confirmand in the final stages of his initiation. He can articulate key moments in the history of the church, the meaning of the sacraments, and the expectations of mass attendance, confession, and church marriage for those who complete the initiation cycle and enter into full church membership.

Throughout the process Alex rarely complained, chatted with other initiates, completed his confirmation homework, and kept a smile on his face. By all appearances

nothing seems amiss. However, Alex is fairly ambivalent on his best days and perhaps even a bit belligerent on his worst. His presence here is primarily due to the expectations of his parents and extended family. “I don’t care if you don’t attend church after this,” his father told him, “but you will go through Confirmation. It’s what you have to do....it’s what our family does....we all have gone through it. When you are done, you can decide what to do from there.”

Based on these expectations and his relative lack of freedom since he cannot yet drive, he does complete. Six months later, however, like the majority of his peers, Alex’s initiation is mostly forgotten as he relates day-to-day in a variety of disconnected social spheres – school, the traveling basketball team, a tight group of male friends, nights out with his girlfriend of nine months, a few family obligations, his job at the local Pizza Hut, and – later in the evenings – chatting with his friends from his community and around the country on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. His parents bought him a nice used car for his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday to provide Alex the freedom to travel to all these disconnected places, and a computer to keep up with his various segmented relationships.

On matters of faith, Alex believes he “really should get to church more often” but when Sundays come around, he finds himself quite tired and trying to catch up on sleep and homework. Church seems like the right idea and he “ought to go” but indeed rarely makes it. In reality, besides very sporadic mass attendance, Alex is hardly connected to the local parish at all. He does not go to confession, does not attend outreach events, and can’t remember most of the names of those with whom he went through confirmation.

Alex’s initiation, derived from the stories of the previous chapter, does not eventuate in ongoing community. He lives in series of disconnected social settings that have their own myths, rituals, beliefs, and values, and while there may be some or even a clear overlap in personnel, such involvement (unless governed by similarly social or familial precepts) will be

by individual decision. Thus Alex is not living in a tight-knit community in which one uncontested meta-narrative governs rituals, behaviors and relational interactions; rather he moves and interacts among the various social settings of his choice, or at least feels he does. While he does need to abide by, or at least negotiate, the particular values and behaviors of the variegated settings, he is still the one making the choices and we will likely choose to leave all current contexts at some point in the next few years without permanently risking his social and economic future.<sup>351</sup>

As already stated these contrasting stories highlight the influence of local sociological factors on the initiation process. In chapter two, the theorists described different models for understanding and analyzing initiation, all of which assumed some kind of some kind of reincorporation into the group with ongoing relationships. Ezike's story is more consistent with such initiation concepts; Alex's story is not. The variable between the two is the social location – a location that helps explain the current discrepancy in Catholic initiation in the Minneapolis context which is predicated on 'individual freedom' as against collective contribution. This is not a clear-cut difference between America and Nigeria, but a community in which interdependence is both proper and wise, and a community in which it is seen as neither necessary (however helpful at times) nor desirable. Let us therefore outline crucial factors related to localization such as community, agency, power, empowerment, opportunity structure, and relational networks and how these social dimensions affect the process of initiation as it relates to reincorporation, post-initiation relationships, and the possible evolution of initiation in the Minneapolis context.

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<sup>351</sup> Were he to have independent wealth sufficient for a life-time, be willing to do the worst paid jobs or follow a life of crime and prison, he would have even less need to link his youthful choices to future outcomes.

## ***Community Organization in Initiation: Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft.***

### ***Gemeinschaft and Initiation***

As mentioned in the introduction, Ferdinand Toennies introduced the term *Gemeinschaft* to describe those social groups more oriented towards collectivism and bound by the shared beliefs and a commitment of individuals to cooperation and “togetherness.”<sup>352</sup> Broadly speaking, the emphasis in such contexts is on the views, needs, and goals of the group before one’s own. “Acceptable” behavior is clearly delineated and determined by the group who prescribes the social norms and common beliefs – often as handed down in the written and unwritten traditions, myths, and narratives.<sup>353</sup>

Ideologically, the individual is to bend their will to that of the group and cooperate with the expected behaviors and beliefs. In this process individual needs are met as all members are expected to contribute to the group and submit their personal agency to the will of the society. The “common good” is primary, and philosophies of shared responsibility, unity, and interdependence tend to prevail for meeting this good.<sup>354</sup> Ultimately, relational interactions, cooperation, hierarchy, and submission are critical for societal stabilization.

Furthermore, in *Gemeinschaft* systems, homogeneity is expected in the rituals, norms, symbols, and myths that comprise the overarching meta-narrative from which individuals get their sense of identity. Community in this sense includes some kind of meaningful, ongoing, participatory encounters with fellow members of the clan, tribe, village or extended family, and usually has recited rules governing the manner in which such interactions take place. The group, Toennies suggests, usually has strong, identifiable boundaries with clearly defined

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<sup>352</sup> Kendell, *Sociology*, 128.

<sup>353</sup> Harry Charalambos Triandis, *Individualism and Collectivism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=luUj8miPuIIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Individualism+and+Collectivism+triandis&hl=en&ei=lcu6TfujE6r40gHD0vjhAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Individualism%20and%20Collectivism%20triandis&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=luUj8miPuIIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Individualism+and+Collectivism+triandis&hl=en&ei=lcu6TfujE6r40gHD0vjhAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Individualism%20and%20Collectivism%20triandis&f=false), 6.

<sup>354</sup> Nicotera, *Understanding Organization*, 86.

criteria for membership based on ascription or formal ties to a birth-member. Ultimately, it is often the ties of kinship, affinity, common language, and sense of place that create these boundaries and form unity of loyalty.<sup>355</sup>

In this way, *Gemeinschaft* generally describes the fictional example of Ezike's community organization. It is also descriptive of other more collectivistic-oriented contexts such as that of rural American Catholic settings a generation ago. The *Gemeinschaft* of such rural parishes is evident in that fathers tended to "have greater authority.....families tended to take care of elderly parents at home....and (a high value was placed on the) conviviality associated with German beer, Irish whiskey, and Italian and French wine."<sup>356</sup> Though the rural settings of Fairbanks and Sauk Rapids tended to be quite mobile and thereby did not have a *Gemeinschaft* structure, such organization may still be present in other rural areas of stable population as well as environments like urban enclaves united by poverty, ethnicity or minority faith. One such example occurs in newly formed, Hispanic-based immigrant communities in eight dioceses in the United States. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops reports that "Hispanics in these dioceses are creating a resurgence of the Catholic Church in some parishes which the Catholic Church was decreasing."<sup>357</sup> The communities are quite tight-knit and collective in organization which may help explain the lower rates of attrition. However, further research on these contexts is necessary.

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<sup>355</sup> Margaret L. Anderson and Howard F. Taylor, *Sociology: The Essentials* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2011), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=xeKM5THSEKsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Sociology:+The+Essentials&hl=en&ei=IMr6Tb3lEMf20gHe5G5Aw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDkQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=xeKM5THSEKsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Sociology:+The+Essentials&hl=en&ei=IMr6Tb3lEMf20gHe5G5Aw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDkQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 422.

<sup>356</sup> David S. Bovee, *The Church and the Land: The National Catholic Rural Life Conference and American Society, 1923-2007* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University Press of America, 2010), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=Yhc4IC9V-wsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Church+and+the+Land:+The+National+Catholic+Rural+Life+Conference+and+American+Society,+19232007&hl=en&ei=EMv6TeLvEqr0QGQ38HDAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Yhc4IC9V-wsC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Church+and+the+Land:+The+National+Catholic+Rural+Life+Conference+and+American+Society,+19232007&hl=en&ei=EMv6TeLvEqr0QGQ38HDAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 18-19.

<sup>357</sup> "Hispanic Ministry Study," <http://www.nccbuscc.org/hispanicaffairs/studygomez.shtml>.

The collectivity of this kind of *Gemeinschaft* often then has a powerful effect on the individual psyche and sense of identity because, according to Emile Durkheim, young individuals develop their self-perception through the spoken language of the group as well as the daily symbolic gestures and visual images, the unwritten and written codes of conduct, and the sacred and mundane rituals of life.<sup>358</sup> As a result, the collective context forms the boundaries of the child's world and shapes their thoughts, behaviors, attitudes, emotions and reactions as she or he grows into adolescence. In this way, the collective establishes a crucial power over individuals even – or especially – when they are young by setting the rules and the parameters of how a person experiences the world; thus lessening the possibility of individual agency. As Steven Lukes writes in a comment relevant to all social interaction,

To put the matter sharply, A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing and shaping or determining his very wants. *Indeed, is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have* – that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires?<sup>359</sup>

When this element in social relationships is linked to a firmly collective ideology, initiation rituals are often quite effective because the collective has already shaped the thoughts, attitudes and, most importantly, the range of possible responses for the individuals as sense of agency. Should an individual become aware of beliefs and behaviors through exposure to outside cultural ideas and norms that deviate from those defined by the group, and they choose to express them, their individualization is often met with punitive measure

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<sup>358</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 407. Durkheim shows how the ordinary material objects and body movements of religious ceremony carry special meanings and powers for the social group that is practicing the ritual. They actually represent the group to itself – they “communicate” by making abstract values sensual – and thus the ritual objects and practices are the symbols of the *group's power over the individual* as it shapes the paradigm through which an individual sees the world.

<sup>359</sup> Steven Lukes, “Power. A Radical View,” in *Power: Critical Concepts, Volume 2*, ed. John Scott (London: MacMillan Press Limited, 1974), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=JhOgKaxOIYIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=power+critical+concepts&hl=en&ei=oMz6TevfM8fa0QG8scyJAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=JhOgKaxOIYIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=power+critical+concepts&hl=en&ei=oMz6TevfM8fa0QG8scyJAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 241. Italics mine.



such as relational restrictions and even the possibility of ex-communication from the group. The institution thus holds the majority of the power over the individual who, even if they internally dissent, gossip, or exert power in other ways, are commonly still part of the ongoing community.

Such is the fictional case of Ezike who had no, or few, other viable options if he wants to receive the economic, religious, and social protection of the group. There is no other respected alternative path available within the place. This does not mean there is a lack of tension and dissonance as individuals negotiate the collective and its initiation expectations, but that negotiation is less likely to include disappearing from the social context since an individual's social identity and economic survival lies within the boundaries of the group. Durkheim writes about initiation and the concept of the self in the collective in that:

Man's characteristic privilege is that the bond he accepts is not physical but moral; that is, social. Man is governed not by a material environment brutally imposed on him, but by a conscience superior to his own, the superiority of which he feels. Because the greater, better part of his existence transcends the body, he escapes the body's yoke, ***but is subject to that of society.***<sup>360</sup>

Therefore, a reasonable assessment of initiation in the *Gemeinschaft* context yields a ritual that commonly eventuates in ongoing community as individuals subject themselves to the group. In this way, the ideology of initiation is likely to be relatively consistent with the unique expression of initiation in a localized context. However, there are other forms of community in which the local expression is less likely to support the ideology of initiation – communities where the strong relational bonds of the *Gemeinschaft* dissolve into a more individualized version of 'community'.

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<sup>360</sup> Emile Durkheim, "Suicide," in *Classical Sociological Theory*, ed. Craig J. Calhoun and others (London: Routledge, 1952), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=c\\_qkAArwRpIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=classical+sociological+theory&hl=en&ei=RM76TeXEO9Oq0AHB4qmAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDcQ6AEwA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=c_qkAArwRpIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=classical+sociological+theory&hl=en&ei=RM76TeXEO9Oq0AHB4qmAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDcQ6AEwA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 197. Italics and bold mine.

### *Gesellschaft and Initiation*

In contrast to *Gemeinschaft*, *Gesellschaft* forms when the “identity born of community surrenders to the anonymity of mass society.”<sup>361</sup> *Gesellschaft* is often paired with cultures that are characterized by high degrees of individualism in which individuals are more self-directed in the institutions of family, education, religion, and politics.<sup>362</sup> When applied ideologically, individualism often manifests itself as an “inalienable right” that is an entitlement at birth, cannot be granted or taken away by social or governmental structure, and leads to the ‘fact’ that every person should be free to choose the path for their livelihood and personal goals.<sup>363</sup> Individualism commonly assumes a degree of opposition to authority and resists social or governmental means of control in order to maintain this primacy of the individual. Society becomes an anonymous collection of singular persons.

Toennies argued *Gesellschaft* occurs as individuals emigrate from the smaller, more homogenous communities of *Gemeinschaft* to cosmopolitan urban contexts. In this numerically and geographically larger society there is an obvious contrast between the intimacy of social relationships and the boundaries of family and kin, and the “impersonal alliances born of modern polity, economic exchange, and state power” that are now part of everyday life.<sup>364</sup> The affiliations and affinity associated with *Gesellschaft* relate to more abstract concepts and contracts such as the national flag, governing laws, workplace, and shared citizenship – in terms of both city and country. It is a much more impersonal context in which,

The emerging industrial order within its burgeoning cities and centralized power is held in one piece by artificial bonds. Such bonds tend to be more malleable; they come and go,

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<sup>361</sup> <http://www.soc.iastate.edu/sapp/soc401toennies.pdf>, 3.

<sup>362</sup> Hofstede, *Culture's*, 149-150.

<sup>363</sup> Susan Welch and others, *Understanding American Government* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2006), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=Mc1bdEtBWRYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Understanding+American+Government+\(&hl=en&ei=n8\\_6TejcBITg0QHqidjBAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Mc1bdEtBWRYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Understanding+American+Government+(&hl=en&ei=n8_6TejcBITg0QHqidjBAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 14.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

disintegrate and reform as the needs of the state, bureaucracy, business, or workplace change. Here, social relationships are based on special needs, class interests, and personal ambition. The connectedness of society is a matter of interlocking positions of status. This formal structure supplants the more natural coming-together of like-minded persons who gain emotional sustenance from sharing a common moral universe.<sup>365</sup>

Through teaching at a local university, I see many adolescents interacting in the *Gesellschaft* context of the western suburbs and their mobility and choice as generally described by confirmation directors is evident. Students may drive as much as twenty miles to school, and in any given week bring their money to a grocery store within a few miles of their home, fill their automobile with gasoline near school, eat at a restaurant in an entirely different city, and look for bargains in shopping malls many miles from their home. Along the way, they exchange money for goods among people of all social backgrounds – most or all of whom they do not know. Walking the street consists of moving alongside others who may not speak the same language, eat the same foods, attend the same religious venues, share ethnicity, or even live near the city itself. At best, the people are connected by more abstract macro-notions of country or freedom, but even this seems difficult in the midst of multiple, though disconnected relationships.

The theory of *Gesellschaft* deals with the artificial construction of an aggregate of human beings which superficially resembles the *Gemeinschaft* in so far as the individuals peacefully live and dwell together. However, in the *Gemeinschaft* they remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors, whereas in *Gesellschaft* they are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors.<sup>366</sup>

As a result, the relational dynamics of *Gemeinschaft* patterns differs from that of *Gesellschaft* where individual agency tends to prevail to some degree over institutional control. This commonly happens in vast settings like America in which the foundation of the

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<sup>365</sup> Ibid. The *Gesellschaft* that is primary among American contexts will be discussed in more depth and detail in the documentary analysis of the field work.

<sup>366</sup> Graeme Salaman, *Community and Occupation: An Exploration of Work/Leisure Relationships* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=GSA4AAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Community+and+Occupation&hl=en&ei=etD6TejgOubX0QHU9uC5Aw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=GSA4AAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Community+and+Occupation&hl=en&ei=etD6TejgOubX0QHU9uC5Aw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 6.

country is based on individual freedoms such as the right to free speech, bear arms, liberty, and the pursuit of personal happiness. While punishment may sometimes result from defiance of country in the case of treason or flag-burning, the rights of the individual to question authority and structure are often protected over and above the power of the traditional institutions.<sup>367</sup> This can force institutions like the government and family to evolve and change due to individualized pressure.”<sup>368</sup>

The individualism of *Gesellschaft* also extends itself into other spheres of popular culture such as professional athletics and the concept of the “team.” In America, confirmands like Alex for whom sports are a “god”, according to Beth Gardson, may grow up rooting for the local baseball team, but will soon learn over that the ‘team’ actually consists of disconnected individuals who are “free agents” and playing to secure a paycheck for their personal livelihood. This “free agency” then extends into the lives of the confirmands and/or their friends. A stark example of this was recently chronicled by the Minneapolis Star and Tribune that wrote of educational open enrollment and how this affected the nationally known Hopkins boys’ basketball team – a city in the western suburbs of Minneapolis. The team remained undefeated while dominating other basketball teams from around the state in route to becoming the 5<sup>th</sup> best basketball team in America. The players, however, are athletes from all around Minnesota – most of who have no history of contact with the Hopkins school. The citizens of city itself – though proud to have one of the best teams in the country – talk

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<sup>367</sup> Charles DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal; The Anti-War Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=gJnzz4bA7X8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=An+American+Ordeal;+The+AntiWar+Movement+of+the+Vietnam&hl=en&ei=5tD6TeWJLaXr0QHlu7DSAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CD8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=gJnzz4bA7X8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=An+American+Ordeal;+The+AntiWar+Movement+of+the+Vietnam&hl=en&ei=5tD6TeWJLaXr0QHlu7DSAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CD8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 214. This has been particularly true in parts of America, for example, and according to sociologists has been increasing over the past fifty years since the social upheaval over the Vietnam War and the concurrent civil rights movement in which questioning authority became a common, almost trendy movement. There are volumes of literature written on this watershed era on American history in which the closest thing to a governmental revolution in the history of America occurred.

<sup>368</sup> Annette Hemmings, *Coming of Age in U.S. High Schools. Economic, Kinship, Religious, and Political Crosscurrents* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=l3CQuvpLRvUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Coming+of+Age+in+U.S.+High+School&hl=en&ei=NdH6TcS2AoLW0QH3zd2RAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0C4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Coming%20of%20Age%20in%20U.S.%20High%20School&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=l3CQuvpLRvUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Coming+of+Age+in+U.S.+High+School&hl=en&ei=NdH6TcS2AoLW0QH3zd2RAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0C4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Coming%20of%20Age%20in%20U.S.%20High%20School&f=false), 92.

about how they struggle to identify with the players that did not even grow up playing basketball in Hopkins. Should they cheer for basketball players that they do not know, may not even live within its city limits, and may have taken the spots of home-grown Hopkins' players? Should this even be a "Hopkins" basketball team? <sup>369</sup>This microcosm of a fragmented *Gesellschaft* community is indicative of larger societal suburban trends in the Minneapolis area in which the initiates live.

One final example would include individualistic notions in matters of religion. Here, faith conversion can be described as an "intensely personal and subjective change of heart."<sup>370</sup> Protestant churches tend to emphasize the need for a "personal Savior" in that each individual is responsible before God to make their own decision about faith – a concept that even the parish-based Catholic Church reported to be true.<sup>371</sup> Recalling the fieldwork, Bishop Parsons of the Arch-Diocese of Minneapolis felt the Catholic Church was becoming more irrelevant in Minneapolis and that more individualized constructions of faith might be helpful. In addition, many of the confirmation directors talked about a sense of individualized faith with which the confirmands participated in the ritual process, and had even been inviting his confirmands to pray to "accept Jesus into their hearts as their *personal* savior." This emphasis on individualized faith seems to encompass the ongoing evolution in the

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<sup>369</sup> John Milea and David La Vaque, "Can't Lose. Can't Win. Hopkins Boys' Basketball," *Star Tribune*, 6 March 2009, <http://www.startribune.com/sports/40578472.html>. Some of the relevant quotes from the article demonstrating the fragmented *Gesellschaft* of Minneapolis are seen as the authors write, "Four seniors from the undefeated boys' basketball team at Hopkins have signed to play with Division I college programs. Outside of Hopkins, however, the persistent question isn't, 'Where are they going?' Instead, it's this: 'Where did they come from?' There's something not right about community-based athletics when you have so many kids from outside the community. We do have open enrollment, and we do have kids making choices nowadays on schools they want to go based on athletics."

<sup>370</sup> Steven M. Tipton, "The Moral Logic of Alternative Religions," *Daedalus* 111, no. 1 (1982): 185, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.webfeat.lib.ed.ac.uk/stable/20024776>.

<sup>371</sup> Michael Carroll, *American Catholics in the Protestant Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=7fwoSIucCl4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=American+Catholics+in+the+Protestant+Imagination&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=1NH6TzfdDeLs0gGQy92lAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=7fwoSIucCl4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=American+Catholics+in+the+Protestant+Imagination&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=1NH6TzfdDeLs0gGQy92lAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 162.

initiation sacraments in which the “vertical dimension” takes precedence and the church exists to support the spiritual journeys of individuals.

As the evolution towards personal faith continues, such contexts emphasize songs like “All I Need is You” and “You are my All and All” in Christian worship services, underlining the personal dimension of the faith. Communion is celebrated alone and in one’s seat while often relegated to a once-a-month celebration in many Protestant churches. Sermons for individual development are the weekly norm. Competition among churches in this context can become fierce to gain individuals through marketing efforts meant to draw people in.<sup>372</sup> Ultimately however, even though the outcome is one of remarkable uniformity, the individual is free to choose from any number of denominations, of which there are likely to be at least five represented in any three square mile radius of a larger American city, and to choose again and again if taste or circumstances change. Minneapolis itself has 419 different churches from which individuals can choose as they move locations, shift their faith foundation, or attempt to fulfill different needs according to their stage of life. This was evident in the “faith-switching” reported by the Pew Forum on Religion.

This individualistic dynamic and *Gesellschaft* context influences the fact that confirmands in the fieldwork tend to move in a series of segmented relational networks – each of which has an internal meta-narrative and a system of values, beliefs, social controls, and initiation rituals. Therefore, unlike Ezike who experiences one initiation ritual, Alex may go through many formal or informal initiations in his disconnected social spheres in order to gain access to or elevation in the group. Those initiations are supposed to eventuate in some of form of ongoing community in the group, but as the decisions Alex makes in one of his

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<sup>372</sup> Michael Argyle, *Psychology and Religion: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2000), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=t\\_7Nyx0xKGoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Psychology+and+Religion&hl=en&ei=AdT6TdjpIKft0gH\\_3pitAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=t_7Nyx0xKGoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Psychology+and+Religion&hl=en&ei=AdT6TdjpIKft0gH_3pitAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false), 188.

spheres do not necessarily overlap with others, he has greater freedom to walk away from any given community without it having repercussions across his social spectrum.

For example, Alex may not actively participate in the Catholic Church, but his decision is unlikely to have any bearing on his position at work, his status on the basketball team, his dating relationships, or life at school. This describes a key dimension in the tension in his initiation process as described by the Confirmation directors who consistently stated they are competing with other social spheres for the attention of their initiations. Greg and Heather in Alexandria Community Church lamented the fact that there were no repercussions for the initiates if they chose to skip confirmation sessions or church services.

These descriptions, then, form the most basic differentiation between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, and demonstrate some of the possible effects community organization has on the initiation process at the local level. *Gemeinschaft* tends to create a societal ethos in which the institution occupies the place of primacy and initiation occurs in a tight-knit community, thus resulting in or maintaining ongoing relationships. *Gesellschaft* tends to create a societal ethos in which the individual occupies the place of primacy and initiation may or may not result in ongoing community relationships depending upon the choices of the individual. Alex's fictional representation of the confirmands in this *Gesellschaft* context helps explain why his and their Catholic initiation does not commonly eventuate in ongoing community, and perhaps why the church is increasingly offering to individualize the initiation process. As we shall see below, there are additional sociological factors that contribute to this phenomenon as well.

### ***Empowerment, Agency and Structure in Initiation***

The human role in initiation is critical and varies according to context and form of community organization. As referenced above, America is ideologically founded on

principles of individualism with rights protected by the Constitution and the pursuit of individual happiness. Yet just a few generations ago it would have been anathema for a newly initiated Catholic person to ignore mass attendance and confession, or to consider switching to a Protestant church – even if such decisions appealed to an “individualized pursuit.” Even today in some American ethnic social groups such as Latino communities, the sense of a bounded Catholic identity remains strong and initiation is followed by ongoing relationships.<sup>373</sup> Despite this cultural sub-section of the population, however, trends increasingly seem to be moving towards the individual forming the locus of their own personalized relational environment – empowered further by their fragmented community organization. To highlight this point, the following section discusses the relationship between empowerment, agency, and structure in initiation within the *Gesellschaft* context – beginning again with the fictional example of Alex that is anchored in the real life experience of initiates as described by the confirmation directors.<sup>374</sup>

Alex’s father is a business executive, his mother a lawyer, and together they take in about \$170,000 annually. He has, as mentioned earlier, rights to his own car to drive him around. He also has his own computer and I-Phone and is networked with a variety of relationships through social media. His school system is one of the finest in the greater Minneapolis area and he has access to the best doctors, travels regularly around the country during school breaks, and has been overseas three times. Psychologically, he is relatively healthy in that he has not experienced trauma associated with violence, consistent relocation, or poverty. Alex would be considered a high-functioning, intelligent young man who has any number of opportunities in front of him.

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<sup>373</sup> This was highlighted in the previous chapter in which recent data collected by CARA suggests that what stability there is in American mass attendance statistics is the result of immigrants who still strongly identify themselves as Catholic. Second, third, and fourth generation Americans of European descent are leaving the church en masse.

<sup>374</sup> In order to not belabor the point, a contrasting example of Ezike is not offered in this section.



As a result, Alex experiences few limitations in life. He has a high degree of empowered social choice due to a convergence of what some sociologists label “agency” and “opportunity structure.” This empowerment is critical, for it allows Alex greater freedoms to more fully realize personal desires and outcomes. Therefore, the sociological dynamics involved in empowering Alex’s ability to choose require further consideration to distinguish why he may leave the community of his initiation.

### ***Empowerment and Initiation***

Broadly defined, the degree of an individual’s empowerment relates to the ability to make effective choices, or seeing their choices result in desired actions and outcomes.<sup>375</sup> An empowered person is one who actively considers possible options and chooses between them rather than having a collective group or institution make or strongly steer choices on their behalf in which they have little to say.<sup>376</sup> The highest degrees of empowerment for such individual action tend to occur where there is a convergence of two main factors: *high capacities for human agency* and a *localized opportunity structure that facilitates choice*.<sup>377</sup>

The dialectic between these two factors is the subject of considerable sociological debate in that there is question as to whether individual agency or the structures of social institutions have a greater influence on the levels of empowerment and human behavior. “Micro-oriented scientists such as Max Weber (say) humans are proactive agents who construct meaning in interaction with others. ....macro-oriented sociologists like Emile

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<sup>375</sup> Ruth Alsop and others, *Empowerment in Practice: From Analysis to Implementation* (Washington D.C.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2006), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=GPLZGEG00e8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Empowerment+in+Practice&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=ET37TYWaJPKx0AHl0bmoDA&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=GPLZGEG00e8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=Empowerment+in+Practice&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=ET37TYWaJPKx0AHl0bmoDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 10.

<sup>376</sup> Kawango E. Agot, “Women, Culture, and HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. What Does the Empowerment Discourse Leave Out?” in *Global Empowerment of Women: Responses to Globalization and Politicized Regions*, ed. Carolyn M. Elliot (New York: Routledge, 2008), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=nDi4oSzGGa8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=global+empowerment+of+women&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=hUD7TdelK4Ht0gHtxqmLAW&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=nDi4oSzGGa8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=global+empowerment+of+women&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=hUD7TdelK4Ht0gHtxqmLAW&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 288.

<sup>377</sup> Alsop, *Empowerment*, 11.

Durkheim (argue) human action is a byproduct of social institutions that are external to the human consciousness (structural determinism.)”<sup>378</sup> Therefore, in the first regard, human agency more often affects the evolution of social environments; in the second, the social environment creates the boundaries of possibility for the human individual; a concept discussed in the previous section on *Gemeinschaft* and considered more fully in a moment.

A detailed review of the nuances of the debate between agency and structure and the sociological theories they engender is beyond the scope of this discussion. However, as the issue is important to provide context for the individual initiatives and the Catholic Church in Minneapolis, it is helpful to consider a starting point for approaching agency and structure. In this case, the lens of *structuration theory* – a theory of social behavior proposed by Anthony Giddens, who argues for a middle ground is helpful in that both concepts affect the kind of human behavior that has created the dissonance in the fieldwork. Giddens writes:

We should guard against the two forms of reductionism which those writings suggest or foster. One is a reductive concept of institutions (which) fails to leave sufficient play for the operation of autonomous social forces. The second is a reductive theory of consciousness which, wanting to show how much of social life is governed by dark currents outside the scope of the actor’s awareness, cannot adequately grasp the level of control which agents are characteristically able to sustain reflexively over their conduct.<sup>379</sup>

Giddens’ theory seems consistent with the social dynamics of the tension observed in this study in which initiation continues to evolve as a result of the ongoing negotiation between institution and individual. In any of the evolutions described in the first chapter, it is

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<sup>378</sup> Elizabeth D. Hutchison, *Dimensions of Human Behavior: Person and Environment* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2008), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=Psa93PjNL5kC&pg=frontcover&dq=humans+are+proactive+agents+who+construct+meaning+in+interaction+with+others+Max+weber&hl=en&ei=Gkb7TZnGGIn10gHc0cnbAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=humans%20are%20proactive%20agents%20who%20construct%20meaning%20in%20interaction%20with%20others%20Max%20weber&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Psa93PjNL5kC&pg=frontcover&dq=humans+are+proactive+agents+who+construct+meaning+in+interaction+with+others+Max+weber&hl=en&ei=Gkb7TZnGGIn10gHc0cnbAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=humans%20are%20proactive%20agents%20who%20construct%20meaning%20in%20interaction%20with%20others%20Max%20weber&f=false), 342.

<sup>379</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Stucturation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=cV8xnSIa0IC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Constitution+of+Society.+Outline+of+the+Theory+of+Stucturation&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=H0X7Tc1NOXX0QGO3MCAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=cV8xnSIa0IC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Constitution+of+Society.+Outline+of+the+Theory+of+Stucturation&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=H0X7Tc1NOXX0QGO3MCAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 5.

difficult to see the exact starting point of the dissonance as related to agency and structure. Therefore, in moving through the following broad descriptions and illustrations of agency and structure, the effects of both will be considered as relevant to the discussion.

### ***Human Agency and Initiation***

Human agency refers to the ability an individual has to pursue personal outcomes and desires within the context of his environment. Though related, “agency” is not synonymous with “empowerment” in that agency refers to the individual’s attempt to exercise choice while empowerment describes the effectiveness of such attempts. Low human agency occurs where there is an inability for human beings to make personal choices that result in desired outcomes, and thus the potential for empowerment is low. High human agency occurs where humans are able to effectively pursue their personal desires and outcomes with a high probability for empowerment. As related to the previous section, agency is a key concept that affects the results of the initiation ritual and whether or not it eventuates in ongoing community.

High or low human agency is typically determined by the number and quality of “assets” an individual has at his disposal including “psychological, informational, organization, material, social, financial, and human assets.”<sup>380</sup> Individuals who possess significant numbers of such assets are more able to effectively assert their human agency and realize their desires, and by and large this is expected to be the case in the more wealthy suburbs of western Minneapolis. Some specific examples of how such assets affect human agency and empowerment are as follows.

### ***Agency and Material Assets***

Suppose two recent high school graduates both hoped to secure a job in a restaurant ten miles from their homes, one from context of poverty, the other is Alex, the archetype of

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<sup>380</sup> Alsop, *Empowerment*, 11.

the initiate in the research. Both individuals have the same GPA from high school, generally the same kind of references, are the same age, interview well, and the restaurant would be satisfied with hiring either one of the two. However, the initiate received an automobile as a gift as he worked his way through high school. The individual from a poorer context did not work in high school or have parents with extra income, and relied upon friends for transportation. Now out of high school, his friends have dispersed or have responsibilities of their own; therefore, he has no way to get to the restaurant on time. Even if he were to be employed by the restaurant, the majority of his money will be spent on housing and food – he will not be able to buy a car – and there is no infrastructure of public transport to facilitate his travels. On this basis, the restaurant manager employs the first individual based on the reliability of his transport.

Related to this fictional example, getting one's driver's license was a common theme among the confirmation directors due to the effect it had on the initiation process in terms of opening possibilities for the initiates. The mass production of the automobile in the 1950s in America has the dual effect of enabling social and geographical movement with greater ease.

Cultural characteristics also made the automobile appealing to Americans. It coincided with some core American values, one of which was geographic mobility. Not only did the automobile greatly increase physical mobility, it was an idea status symbol for “migrant” Americans because it could go with the individual and was an easily recognizable sign of his status. The core American values...principles of individualism and freedom of movement flourished best in America.<sup>381</sup>

It is perhaps no coincidence that the drop in mass attendance demonstrated in the CARA research occurs around the same time as the mass production of the automobile. New horizons were opened to Americans as they were no longer beholden to the town or city in

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<sup>381</sup> Leslie Dale Feldman, *Freedom as Motion* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2001), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=42ZqYSNcJYwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Freedom+as+Motion&hl=en&ei=7kb7TYWeJ8jo0QGPxfmoAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=42ZqYSNcJYwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Freedom+as+Motion&hl=en&ei=7kb7TYWeJ8jo0QGPxfmoAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 58.

which they grew up. As we saw in the Fairbanks and Sauk Rapids communities the car had a significant effect on Catholic initiation. Automobile ownership reduced some of the geographic vastness of the United States and opened the possibility of mobility out of small-town America – traditionally the hub of American Catholicism. Therefore, initiates had more freedom to realize individualized choices to mix with peers in other cities with other social dynamics.

Furthermore, difference in material assets goes well beyond having the capacity to purchase a used car and into the embedded stratification of society by class as defined by one's overall wealth and the power this creates. "Wealth", as defined by that which a person owns and has accumulated over the course of a lifetime through both work and inheritance, is a "particularly important indicator of individual and family access to life chances."<sup>382</sup> The resources owned "can produce the opportunity to secure the "good life" in whatever form is needed – education, business, training, justice health, comfort, and so on."<sup>383</sup>

As outlined in the introduction, the western suburbs of Minneapolis are home to the "Lake District" and people of great wealth. The stratification of wealth in this context has been in place for at least the past one hundred years and is home to the "old money" and billionaires to which James Rosen referred as members in his church. Growing up in this context, I served as a golf caddie in an exclusive country club near Lake Minnetonka. Though my parents had substantial means, it paled in comparison with those for whom I caddied. They and their children often had multiple cars and boats, lived in mansions exceeding

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<sup>382</sup> Anna Leon-Guerrero, *Social Problems: Community, Policy, and Social Action* (Newbury Park: Pine Forge Press, 2008), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=CqaRFAlfM9EC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Social+Problems:+Community,+Policy,+and+Social+Action&hl=en&ei=NUf7TaWGIWr0AHx5KnaAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=CqaRFAlfM9EC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Social+Problems:+Community,+Policy,+and+Social+Action&hl=en&ei=NUf7TaWGIWr0AHx5KnaAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 39.

<sup>383</sup> Thomas Shapiro, *The Hidden Cost of Being African-American* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=vmkB1scgtN4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Hidden+Cost+of+Being+AfricanAmerican&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=pUf7TcbmJ6Ta0QHvLWpAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=vmkB1scgtN4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Hidden+Cost+of+Being+AfricanAmerican&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=pUf7TcbmJ6Ta0QHvLWpAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 34.

15,000 square feet, regularly traveled, and had all the latest technological innovations. The churches in the area were considered fortunate to have such people attend as a “giving unit” and would rarely, if ever, attempt to assert authority over them in matters of community or faith. Faith individualization and privatization, as alluded to by Bill Sanford, was common. These would also have been the same parishioners who complained to Chris Nelson that “once-a-month” confirmation was far too demanding on their time and interests. Chris could not afford to defy them as she would risk losing them as giving units.

The general wealth of the western suburbs of Minneapolis affords youth like Alex the possibilities to define for themselves what constitutes the “good life” in terms of how he spends his time in a variety of social contexts. The church cannot assert meaningful power over his choices, and is thus forced to compete for his time and energy since Alex is able to do what he would like to do and with whom he would like to interact. This is just one example of how a specific asset can affect agency in the Minneapolis context, and why the church appears to be evolving towards using initiation as a “marketing tool” to draw people into the community. More will be said on this at the end of the chapter; however, there are two other relevant assets worth mentioning at this point.

### ***Agency and Psychological Assets***

Assets affecting agency can take psychological forms as well in which the paradigm or lens through which one views life affects their sense of choice and even their ability to conceive of and construct choice outside the social norms. A person’s psychological assets typically result from a highly complex mix of individual choices and personal experiences as well as the confines of the social group that, as stated earlier, strongly influences one’s sense of identity and possible range of values and choices. There can be such variability and individuality in the psychological assets that two individuals in the same situation could be considered to have high or low empowerment based upon their psychological outlook as

indicated in the recent statistics from Ethiopia where 85% of women believe husbands are, on many occasions, justified for beating their wives.<sup>384</sup>

In this scenario, two women exist in this same social group but have very different senses of empowerment. If, for example, the first woman falls into the category of psychologically believing her beatings can be justified, she likely will feel empowered to simply follow the social norms to avoid such punishments and knowing/believing that she “deserves” the beating if she doesn’t. She does not experience a lack of empowerment since the societal behaviors are consistent with her psychological beliefs and expectations. Perhaps a second woman, however, does not believe such beatings are justified. She may follow the social norms to avoid the punishments, but has a lower sense of empowerment because the societal norms are inconsistent with her psychological beliefs and expectations, yet she has no power to change her social group to bring it in line with her life paradigm.

For the confirmands in the fieldwork, psychological assets can take on characteristics related to a sense of entitlement that comes from being in a position of societal power. If youth believe they are entitled to realize their own desires and goals, they are more likely to reject or manipulate authority and community to assert their individualized choices and even possibly realize them. This is evident in Greg and Heather’s concern that confirmands choose soccer on Sunday mornings over confirmation and yet expect that they can still be confirmed. The context of the Minneapolis suburbs is, as demonstrated, primarily white and wealthy where youth grow up with a personal sense of power given the possibilities created by material assets. The following description from The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness is helpful for understanding how one’s psychological lens affects if not creates the ability to make choices.

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<sup>384</sup> Tegbar Yigzaw and others, “Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women by Their Spouses: A Qualitative Study in Northwest Ethiopia,” *Ethiopian Journal of Health Development* 24, no. 1 (2010): 39, <http://www.ajol.info/index.php/ejhd/article/viewFile/62943/50840>.

The concept of internalized privilege (helps) explain why people in positions of power usually don't see how their actions impact others and move through the world with a sense of entitlement....Value is no longer placed on community, place, or history but, instead, on access to power and commodities. Business decisions are based on purely economic rationality, without taking into account these other dimensions. Communities are reduced to individuals and families to reproductive units.<sup>385</sup>

Such psychological frames are likely to be consistent with the kind of environment in which Alex grows up. He may not be aware of this theory, but is likely to work from it in explaining why he is unwilling to come under the social jurisdiction of a community like the Catholic Church given his perception that it is taking away his individual freedoms. In such a psychological environment, it is difficult to create a sense of submission necessary for any initiation ritual and its expected aftermath. Power comes from individual choice, not from the community's conferment, and therefore, the power of the psychological asset in one's invulnerability is a power contextual variable in initiation.

### ***Agency and Social Assets***

At the risk of belaboring the point, one final example of asset and agency can be applied to the examples of Ezike and Alex and their differentiation in human agency and empowerment as seen on the level of social assets. Ezike, in his *Gemeinschaft* context, has only one possible social group in which to realize his desires and outcomes. That social group tends to define, as structural determinism suggests, the parameters of his economic, relational, informational, and psychological possibilities. Even if Ezike mentally conceives of a deviant possibility, he is unlikely to experience the empowerment to realize that opportunity since the group controls his wellbeing and he does not have other social groups from which to choose – unless he is willing to live as a social isolate depending on no one. Alex, on the

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<sup>385</sup> William Aal, "Moving From Guilt to Action: Antiracist Organizing and the Concept of 'Whiteness' for Activism and the Academy," in *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*, ed. Birgit Brander Rasmussen and others (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=ZtVelkU3XAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Making+and+Unmaking+of+Whiteness&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=2Ej7TdWIOISgQealITeCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=ZtVelkU3XAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Making+and+Unmaking+of+Whiteness&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=2Ej7TdWIOISgQealITeCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 299.



other hand, even as an initiated Catholic, may choose to marry someone from outside the Catholic Church since he has powerful material and psychological assets that have led to multiple social groups in which he interacts. One of the older gentlemen from St. Benedict's confided in me that he used to sing at Protestant weddings. Though the church would frown on this (had they known), his friends appreciated his actions which prevented him from living as an isolate.

Given these examples, it can be said that one's empowerment is directly related to one's degree of human agency as determined by the number of assets a person possesses. As the number and significance of assets varies by location, difference in the effectiveness of initiation across various contexts is the logical result. However, there is not always a direct correlation between the number of assets and the level of empowerment. Even someone who possesses a number of psychological, financial, material, and social assets may not be able to make effective choices to realize their personal desires or goals. This is due to the opportunity structure in a social setting and its facilitation of human agency. Structure can both inhibit and empower human agency; thus a brief section on the nature of structure and opportunity and its relation to empowerment follows.

### **Opportunity Structure**

Structure is a complex subject to analyze – particularly in *Gesellschaft* contexts because a given location may have multiple layers of opportunity in the interplay between institutional and individual power. For example, people may feel empowered at the ideological level of the American Constitution in which the value of the “individual pursuit of happiness” is upheld on a judiciary basis as a legal norm. However, in a location of poverty in an American city, agency assets may remain low if people live without a job, do not have access to bank credit, are constrained by higher levels of violence, or held back by unwritten rules of prejudice against race or gender. People in poverty may have lower possibilities to

realize their pursuit of happiness even though the macro-context may insist its philosophical basis is highly empowering. This fact indicates the importance of exact locality and the placing therein on the structures of opportunity:

Opportunity structure designates the scale and distribution of conditions that provide variable probabilities for individuals and groups to achieve specifiable outcomes.....Location in the social structure strongly influences, though it does not wholly determine, the extent of access to the opportunity structure. By concept then, an expanding or contracting opportunity structure does not carry with it the uniform expansion or contraction of opportunities for all sectors of a socially stratified population.....<sup>386</sup>

Locality of structure also illustrates why the same person may be less empowered or more empowered depending upon the context in which they find themselves. Ezike's lack of social assets and individual choice are the direct result of his opportunity structure Alex, by contrast, can choose to act on his individualized beliefs. He may come under the punishments of his parents who could take away some of his privileges like the computer or his car, but his capacity to find social groups who share his beliefs, the possibility of finding a mate, and his future earnings potential would not ultimately be compromised in any meaningful fashion. The main difference between the two is the level of empowerment to use social assets as defined by their opportunity structure. The initiates of the western suburbs of Minneapolis, by virtue of the reports of the confirmation directors, seem to move in this consistent and constant social mobility.

Referring back to Giddens' theory of structuration, then, one more fully understands human behavior as the interplay between localized opportunity structures and the possibilities of human agency. This interplay can be seen in the following quote:

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<sup>386</sup> Robert Merton, *On Social Structure and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=j94XiVDwAZEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=On+Social+Structure+and+Science&hl=en&ei=2Un7TaHUGuf30gH4\\_G4Aw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=j94XiVDwAZEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=On+Social+Structure+and+Science&hl=en&ei=2Un7TaHUGuf30gH4_G4Aw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 153.

Human agency operates within a causal structure involving triadic reciprocal causation. In this transactional view of self and society, personal factors in the form of cognitive, emotional, and biological events; behavior patterns; and environmental events all operate as determinants that influence each other bidirectionally..... Therefore, personal agency operates within a broad network of social structural influences. For the most part, social structures represent authorized social practices carried out by human beings in occupying designated roles. Within the societal rule structures there is a lot of personal variation in their interpretation, adoption, enforcement, circumvention, or active opposition.<sup>387</sup>

More detail on opportunity structure is unnecessary at this point as the ongoing point of this discussion is to demonstrate the interwoven dimensions of community, agency, and structure and how these concepts both affect the initiation process in a given context like Minneapolis and offer a substantial foundation for predicting a possible trajectory of initiation evolutions towards individualization in this context. However, it is important to stress at this point that what may be true on the ideological level of these concepts is often not easily applied on the localized level, which is complex and filled with caveats. For example, a localized *Gemeinschaft* context in a macro-*Gemeinschaft* oriented society is likely to entail a structure that limits opportunity and human agency; thus initiation will commonly eventuate in valuable ongoing relationships. Likewise, a poor location in a *Gesellschaft* context may be more likely to result in a micro-*Gemeinschaft* and initiation may be more effective even though the macro social orientation is individualistic.

With these and other qualifications noted, it can be said on a general basis that, based on the reports of the fieldwork, Alex and the real-life initiates of the fieldwork live in the wealthy “Lake District”, a *Gesellschaft* context that is likely to create opportunities and empower human agency; thus initiation commonly does not eventuate in ongoing

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<sup>387</sup> Albert Bandura, “Self-Efficacy: The Foundation of Agency,” in *Control of Human Behavior, Mental Processes, and Consciousness*, ed. Walter J. Perrig and Alexander Grob (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=GOBJKwrITuC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Control+of+Human+Behavior,+Mental+Processes,+and+Consciousness&hl=en&ei=jEr7TY\\_fNKfZ0QHostjDAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=GOBJKwrITuC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Control+of+Human+Behavior,+Mental+Processes,+and+Consciousness&hl=en&ei=jEr7TY_fNKfZ0QHostjDAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 29.

relationships. Even if Alex is forced by his parents to participate in the initiation process, by the time he leaves the home he experiences great freedom to construct a social environment according to his own tastes and affinities. The confirmation director at Bethesda Methodist told me it would be “weird for a confirmand to hang around which is why they encourage them to move out of Minnesota when they leave high school.” Initiates are encouraged to make their own path in life, a notion that assumes a level of empowerment to realize choices such as moving hundreds of miles away.

This kind of agency and empowerment proved the common theme among the reports of the confirmation directors and wider interviews, the survey at the university, and the persistence of the attrition. This combination of this empowerment in a *Gesellschaft* context yields a set of relational environments in which the individual forms the center of her own universe and the sphere in which she interacts may or may not be connected to one another. As this is a critical picture for predicting the evolutionary trends in initiation, one further section is necessary describing individualized networks as a means of understanding the kind of individual to whom the church is attempting to minister.

### ***Network Theory and Initiation***

Network theory analyzes human attitudes and behaviors through the lens of social relationships based on the “importance of relationships among interacting units.”<sup>388</sup> Theorists in this field define the strengths and weaknesses of the linkages as explanatory for the attitudes that give rise to individuals preferring certain social settings and relationships over and above an alternative sphere. In this way network theory differs from other forms of social analysis such as the “typological analysis” of Max Weber which takes ideational data

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<sup>388</sup> Stanley Wasserman and Katherine Faust, *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=CAm2DpIqRUIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Social+Network+Analysis:+Methods+and+Applications&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=\\_Ev7TazyKlbc0QG38qmrAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=resu&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=CAm2DpIqRUIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Social+Network+Analysis:+Methods+and+Applications&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=_Ev7TazyKlbc0QG38qmrAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=resu&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 4.

such as meanings and motives and contrasts deviant meanings and motives with that of what seems normative in surrounding social groups such as institutions and “cultural spheres of society.”<sup>389</sup> In contrast to these approaches to explaining human behavior, network theory seeks to capture the relations that include systems of individual agents, consider individualized data, and determine behavior in the context of relational structures.<sup>390</sup>

In approaching behavior and attitude analysis through this relational methodology, network theory is built upon a similar philosophical framework as structuration theory in which there is a dialectical interplay between agency and structure. For example, actors and their actions in network theory are viewed as interdependent rather than autonomous; relational ties allow for the flow of resources and materials for the actor; individuals view their networks as providing opportunities or constraints; and models “conceptualize structure as lasting patterns among actors.”<sup>391</sup> The development of the most sophisticated forms of network theory commonly requires significant qualitative data gathering methods from long term observation, and even advanced quantitative analysis – the discussion of which is beyond the scope of this work. Therefore, only the key concepts in network theory of nodes, ties, dyads, triads and groups are presented in general terms as a means of illustrating the daily life of the initiates and how their individualized networks both contribute to the dissonance and support the prediction of an micro-evolution of Catholic initiation in the Minneapolis context.

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<sup>389</sup> Guy Oakes, “Guenther, Roth, and Weber Studies in America,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 11, no 1 (1997): 176, <http://www.springerlink.com.ezproxy.webfeat.lib.ed.ac.uk/content/x718j2581gl15711/fulltext.pdf>. The full quote from the article on typological analysis reads, “In this perplexing collection of texts, left unfinished at his death, Weber developed a typological analysis of actors, actions, social relationships, and organizations; a structural analysis that demonstrates how these types are situated in the principal institutional orders and cultural spheres of society...”

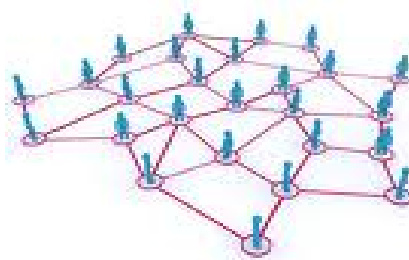
<sup>390</sup> John Scott, *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1991), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=Ww3\\_bKcz6kgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Network+Analysis:+A+Handbook&hl=en&ei=8U77TcyMF4fy0gHBrWwAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Ww3_bKcz6kgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Network+Analysis:+A+Handbook&hl=en&ei=8U77TcyMF4fy0gHBrWwAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 3.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

## ***Key Concepts in Network Theory***

### *Nodes and Ties*

Two fundamental concepts in network theory are “nodes” – or the *actors* in a network, and “ties” – or the *relationships* between these actors.<sup>392</sup> There are numerous types of ties that exist between nodes including business transactions, organizational affiliations, physical connections, biological relationships, and friendships – each of which contributes to the permeability of the network, the fluidity of resources, the development of assets, and many other social dynamics.<sup>393</sup> The most basic social network is graphically represented as a map of all the relevant ties among the nodes under observation.<sup>394</sup> This graphic is often plotted in a series of circles and lines and provides a visual demonstration of the relational implications of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, agency, structure, and empowerment. The following is a sample graphic representing basic construction of relationships among circles/boxes and lines in which the nodes are those individuals in the circles and the ties are the lines between them. Further detail specifically related to this research is provided in the next section.



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<sup>392</sup> Andrew J. DuBrin, *Political Behavior in Organizations* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2009), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=qrVBcJNtiOMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Political+Behavior+in+Organizations&hl=en&ei=F1H7Tc6iLrX0QGqv4HYAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=qrVBcJNtiOMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Political+Behavior+in+Organizations&hl=en&ei=F1H7Tc6iLrX0QGqv4HYAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 199.

<sup>393</sup> Wasserman and Faust, *Social*, 18.

<sup>394</sup> DuBrin, *Political*, 199.

### *Dyads, Triad, and Sub-Groups*

Dyads and triads form demonstrate common linkages between nodes, and consist of a pair of actors or a threesome of actors who are interconnected.<sup>395</sup> Analysis of dyads is often less complex than that of triads or sub-groups in that it is a singular relationship. Here, qualitative analysis reveals whether it is reciprocal or not, whether specific types of relationships tend to cluster together, and some of the key reason for why the ties were originally established.<sup>396</sup> In addition, dyadic analysis attempts to determine the length and intensity of the ties as well as whether they are direct or brokered through some form of intermediary.<sup>397</sup> Triads, by contrast, are typically more complex in that there are “three potential pairings” that have to be analyzed. For example, in a triadic “friendship linkage” commonalities and difference of linkages would need to be established in terms of attitudes, reasons for the relationship, evaluations, etc.<sup>398</sup> Different nodes are likely to be in the friendship for different reasons, yet they remain tied together. Finally, sub-groups form the most complex forms of relational networks short of the entirety of the social context itself, and consist of how the various dyads and triads relate to the overall group.<sup>399</sup>

### *Group*

The group is perhaps best defined as the “collection of actors on which ties are to be measured.”<sup>400</sup> The most important factor in defining the group is recognizing that, for analytical purposes, boundaries need to be placed around the extent of how far-reaching relational ties will be – even if those boundaries are relatively artificial. If no boundaries

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<sup>395</sup> Wasserman and Faust, *Social*, 18.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid.

<sup>397</sup> David Knoke and Song Yang, *Social Network Analysis* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2008), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=buiJi6HtGusC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Social+Network+Analysis&hl=en&ei=lfH7TbyfFqTL0QHO1fmIAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CEQQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=buiJi6HtGusC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Social+Network+Analysis&hl=en&ei=lfH7TbyfFqTL0QHO1fmIAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CEQQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false), 13.

<sup>398</sup> Wasserman and Faust, *Social*, 18.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

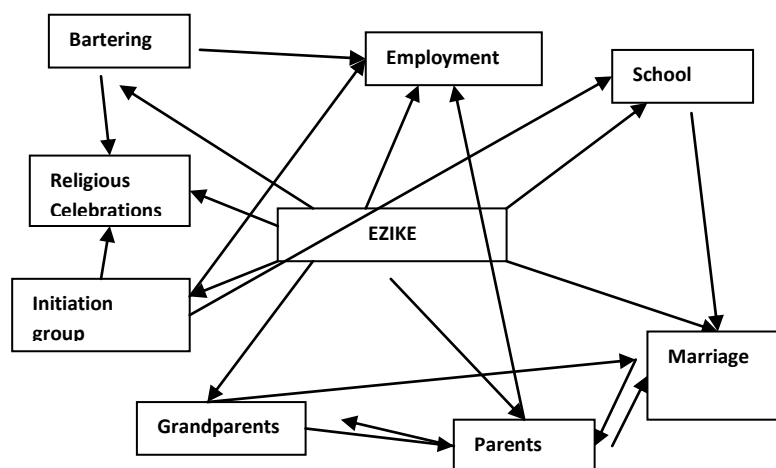
<sup>400</sup> Ibid.

exist, then the relational ties can extend almost infinitely in complexity to the point that making any statement or evaluation of the group, however qualified, is impossible. Instead, in network theory qualifications can be made and data interpreted for possible extrapolation. Wasserman and Faust write, “A group, then, consists of a finite set of actors who for conceptual, theoretical, or empirical reasons are treated as a finite set of individuals on which network measurements are made.”<sup>401</sup>

### ***Application to the Minneapolis Context***

These concepts of network theory can now be applied to the initiation example of Alex as the ongoing archetype for initiates in the fieldwork. Alex interacts in a series of social spheres, few of which are linked together by any other relationships, with a resulting low degree of social knowledge of and control over those represented. Indeed in the absence of overlapping relationships, Alex can reject his parish with few overall implications beyond that of negotiating family expectations. This is in contrast to Ezike who, as stated earlier, risks social isolation should he reject the group. Therefore, Alex has greater choice than Ezike in choosing whether to participate in the community of his initiation. Their networks can be depicted graphically in the two figures below:

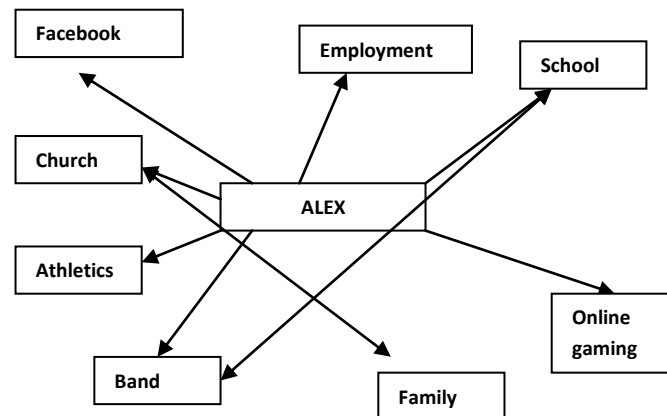
**Ezike's Network**



<sup>401</sup> Ibid.



### Alex's Network



The church, in Alex's case, becomes one of a number of disconnected relational spheres vying for his time and attention, and, in the words of Greg and Heather in the fieldwork, the church tends to "lose out" to the other spheres. This losing out is magnified because of both the lack of traditional pressures of family and nearby community members demanding Alex to participate, and the lack of consequences from the church for his failure to do so. In addition, other social spheres exert more severe consequences should Alex fail to participate. The confirmation director of Ascension Lutheran Church talked about "resume building" among adolescents in an increasingly competitive culture. She described a scenario in which youth need to have all the "right" experiences in order to get into the best schools. These experiences include athletics, school leadership, participation in advanced curriculum courses, and demonstrable jobs – the church does not factor into such resumes. Should the adolescent fail to "show up" in any of these environments, another youth is waiting to "take their spot." If the choice is between participation in the church and participation in one of these alternate environments, the adolescent is likely to decide against church participation to continue building their reputation.

In this way, the church's power to retain and exert behavioral control over its parishioners like Alex is greatly reduced, and it is forced to provide reasons compelling to Alex to give it his attention over and against the many other ways he can spend his time. Based on the statistics of the CARA and Pew Research organizations in the previous chapter, as well as the noted pattern of attrition throughout the fieldwork, this is a difficult task. The church seems to be maintaining the attention of fewer of its parishioners post-initiation with each passing generation. At least part of this issue relates to individuals empowered by various assets to spend their free time as they choose, and their "non-free" time building their resumes for future opportunities. This dynamic leads to the the dissonance in the initiation process documented throughout the dissertation.

Thus we see in the lengthy discussion of this section the effects of local sociological factors seem to have on the initiation process in the western suburbs of Minneapolis. Fragmented communities, when combined with empowered individuals, has created a social environment in which individuals make and realize choices based on what each relational sphere can "do for them." The confirmation directors, along with other evidence from the local bishop, surveys, and macro-quantitative data all, to some degree, corroborate these dynamics. As a result, the church and its initiation process, like it has in the past, seem to be evolving in an attempt to meet these sociological realities. In the final section of this chapter, attention is turned to the specific hints of this evolution in which the church appears to be offering to support the faith journey of the individual. While initiation is still the core dimension of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist, a subtle shift of language suggests the overall process can be modified to meet the needs of the individual in an attempt to perhaps gain their attention over and against the other disconnected social spheres.

### **III. Evolution of Initiation in the Minneapolis Context**

The hints of an evolution towards individualization can be found in multiple sources – each of which are outlined below. Firstly, the reports of the confirmation directors along with the additional evidence in the fieldwork suggest the institution is losing power to prescribe individual behavior and is shifting towards meeting the expectations of the initiate in order to compete with other social spheres offering individual benefits. Secondly, examining descriptions of initiation in multiple parishes – both within the Minneapolis context and outside of it – reveals that churches commonly state the process can be somewhat individualized in accordance with the specific faith journey of the initiate. Finally, recent literature on initiation in contexts similar to that of Minneapolis describes the difficulty of initiating individuals when their agency exceeds the power of the institution to prescribe behavior. Each of these three pieces of evidence are provided below and, together, create a synthetic picture of an evolution in which “meeting the needs of the individual” is being emphasized alongside of, and even to perhaps a greater degree, than incorporation into the church. After each is addressed, a brief comment is offered related to a new kind of dissonance that may emerge even should the church more successfully retain its members as a result of the efforts to meet their needs.

#### ***Reports from the Fieldwork***

##### ***Importance of “Personal Faith” in Competing with Other Social Spheres***

While it was perhaps not the first time individualized dynamics in initiation were revealed in the interviews, it caught my attention when Bishop Parsons in the Arch-Diocesan Offices suggested other faith traditions were “doing a better job than us in emphasizing the need for personal commitment” from the individual. As described in chapter five, Bishop Parsons discussed the ongoing shift from tightly-organized communities of past generations in which individuals were “carried along culturally” in their faith choices to less organized

communities in which such social pressures are no longer exerted to this degree. Thus Parsons argued the Catholic Church needed to invite people into individual relationship with Jesus Christ who would become their “personal savior.”

Parsons derived such language from something he is “coming to appreciate from the Baptist perspective” in which one of the central and ongoing rituals during Sunday service includes an exposition of the “gospel” message in which the story of the crucifixion is narrated and forgiveness of sins emphasized.<sup>402</sup> After this message, people in the pews are invited to “pray a prayer of faith” inviting Jesus “into their heart” to forgive them of their sins and start a personal relationship with him in order to fill their perceived existential needs.<sup>403</sup> The emphasis is on the vertical dimension of one’s relationship with God, and the horizontal dimension of life in community is rarely, if ever, mentioned in this presentation. Parsons argued such people may be making a “commitment of the heart” that is often absent when one is carried along by the structures of the community. Therefore, Parsons suggested the Catholic Church needs to formally and distinctly call people into a “personal relationship with Jesus” as a significant part of the initiation process.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>402</sup>I put the word “gospel” in quotations to emphasize it is a contextualized version commonly presented in Baptist contexts.

<sup>403</sup> R.A. Torrey, *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), Google Books,

[http://books.google.com/books?id=a1sxRINCGIEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Power+of+Prayer+and+the+Prayer+of+Power&hl=en&ei=A1P7TZffHY6u0AG0heiDAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=a1sxRINCGIEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Power+of+Prayer+and+the+Prayer+of+Power&hl=en&ei=A1P7TZffHY6u0AG0heiDAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 127. The prayer of faith is one in which individuals bow their heads and repeat the words of the minister who leads them in an individual prayer towards Jesus. Torrey, a relatively well-known minister in the American context, is an example of one who advocates for this kind of tradition and writes that “the prayer of faith” is the great secret of getting what we need in our personal life....”

<sup>404</sup> It should be noted that I was raised in a similar tradition in which such “gospel” invitations were a regular ritual in the church. I and many of my high school peers prayed this “prayer of faith” at some point (or many points) in our church experience. The vast majority of us experienced a significant, if not permanent, degree of attrition from our local church in the ensuing years. I have since hundreds of students at the university in which I teach if they have prayed the “prayer” and if it “stuck.” The vast majority indicate they are not a part of that local church either. This is important to emphasize in that I am only reporting what Bishop Parsons said that relates to the evolutionary process, not that I am in any way advocating for a faith tradition praying “prayers of faith.” At least from my context and anecdotal questions, it seems this method is no more effective for retaining young people in the church.

Parson's observations, as it turns out, related to the general approach of Bill Sanford at St. Gregory's parish in which we see an emphasis on personal choice and experience in the initiation process. In developing the initiation program among his youth, Sanford calls them to a "conversion experience" sometime between the ages of thirteen and fifteen. As a result, he claimed to see a pattern among some of his youth who used to think Mass was boring and God wasn't real until a "break-through" happened where "Jesus became a reality" and they experienced God's love in a personal way. The youth then say God is a "personal reality for me." If this happens, said Sanford, then the "Eucharist becomes (their) Catholic moment" where the initiate makes an ongoing personal choice to follow God again that day.

Thus Sanford tries to "make a strong connection with the sacraments and inner conversion" – a statement which reveals a subtle shift in which personal experience is emphasized alongside, or even in replacement of, the communal dimension of initiation. He deemed this shift necessary because he is competing with youth who are "very committed to sports programs, very committed to education, very committed to lots of things" that fulfill their individual desires. There needs to be the personal dimension in initiation towards meeting needs in order to elicit commitment to the church as well. Sanford states this process is very much akin to the notion that the church needs to "in a sense evangelize and catechize" the child at the same time in order to provide interior motivations in the absence of community and/or institutional power to prescribe behavior.

Parson's descriptions and Sanford's process were further corroborated in an additional interview I conducted during the writing phase of this dissertation. I contacted Michael Beachem, founder and director of a para-church ministry in Minneapolis whose express purpose is "train Catholic young adults for mission work and send them around the country in teams to conduct evangelistic retreats in parishes and schools." Beachem's "basic contention (is) that a good number of Catholic young people have not really heard the gospel in a

language they can understand since we tend to catechize and presume faith and build on that when in many cases it is not there.” Beachem then works with parishes across the country to provide weekend retreats in which young Catholics from a variety of churches come together to learn about issues of faith, but perhaps more importantly engage on issues that are directly relevant and important to their own faith journey, sense of identity, and various youth issues of the day. If the church can create an invitation that youth deem relevant to themselves, they will be more likely to commit to the church – at least this is the premise.

Beachem’s ministry thus emphasizes a personalized and individualized dimension to being Catholic in order to increase rates of retention within the church. He reported a degree of success in this regard among those who attend the retreats, but the numbers prove difficult to track. It should be noted, however, that the efficacy of such an approach is not relevant as the central point we see in his ministry (and in the reports of Sanford and Parsons) relates to an evolutionary shift towards emphasizing personal faith and individualized commitment as an important part of the initiation process. In this, the church offers initiates a personal faith that provides forgiveness of sins, offers the possibility of God’s personal love, and promises to address issues relevant to them.

This attempt to meet individual needs seems to be related to the power of agency individuals experience in this context as they have “become used to” making social choices according to that which fulfills their personal desires. In addition to the above reports, this dynamic is seen in the reports of confirmation directors who, like Sanford, talked extensively of other social spheres against which they are competing. Chris Nelson reported the church often becomes optional when students need to “complete a big homework project” – a necessity for them as getting high grades is critical for getting into the “right” universities and furthering their career possibilities. Beth Gardson reported “every church program is fighting against what is the kids’ primary commitment (of sports which is) the god” – a fact

corroborated by Mary Stockbridge who mentioned sports in particular as a competing interest. Parents are loathe to skip sports if there is a conflict between it and church because, in addition to the resume building dimension, there are perceived social repercussions among their friends, and they will “hate church” as a result.

Because sports seem to be quite important in American society, participation in them serves as a good example for how directors like Gardson and Stockbridge need to compete against them for individual attention. In one study male students most frequently answered “athletic star” when asked how they would like to be remembered after they graduate from high school.<sup>405</sup> High school athletes enjoy popular status in their schools which leads to non-sport-related benefits in other social settings such as being treated better and awarded further privileges.<sup>406</sup> Female athletes frequently feel less pressure to engage in sexual activity in high school because they have more “bargaining chips” for asserting their personal identity due to athletic achievement.<sup>407</sup>

This is just one example of how a social environment in the Minneapolis context might be perceived to meet the personal needs of the individual, thus prompting them to engage or “commit” to that sphere over and against others such as the church. As a result, Catholic initiation in these contexts seems to be evolving, as described above, to emphasis personal dimensions of faith and how initiation can serve the needs of the individual. This

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<sup>405</sup> Anna Frank, *Sports and Education: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2003), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=dP\\_bvvTxDMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Sports+and+Education:+A+Reference+Handbook&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=elP7TejA6Ww0AHV3v3LAW&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=dP_bvvTxDMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Sports+and+Education:+A+Reference+Handbook&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=elP7TejA6Ww0AHV3v3LAW&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 132.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid.

<sup>407</sup> Andrew Yiannakis and Merrill J. Melnick, *Contemporary Issues in the Sociology of Sport* (Champaign: Human Kinetics, Inc., 2001), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=NNuDZJtRweUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Contemporary+Issues+in+the+Sociology+of+Sport&hl=en&ei=\\_VP7Te6yNqfa0QGOk\\_XgAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Contemporary%20Issues%20in%20the%20Sociology%20of%20Sport&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=NNuDZJtRweUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Contemporary+Issues+in+the+Sociology+of+Sport&hl=en&ei=_VP7Te6yNqfa0QGOk_XgAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Contemporary%20Issues%20in%20the%20Sociology%20of%20Sport&f=false), 91.

becomes even more apparent when the descriptions of various initiation programs around the country are analyzed in terms of what initiation “offers.”

### *Examples from Various Parishes*

A brief scan of various parish websites and their descriptions of sacramental initiation reveals a distinct emphasis on shaping the process in accordance with the needs of the individual. The parish page for RCIA at St. Bartholomew in San Mateo, CA states those interested in Catholic initiation are under “no obligation to make any kind of commitment nor is there pressure exerted on anyone to become Catholic. We respect the conscience and decision of each inquirer.”<sup>408</sup> Parishes in Knoxville, Tennessee state, “The Catholic Church warmly welcomes new members and provides them with spiritual formation according to their needs.”<sup>409</sup> The timeframe is “very flexible depending on the spiritual needs of each participant.” Holy Family Church in California is an “initiating community (that) nurtures individuals on their faith journeys.”<sup>410</sup> The confirmation program at Pax Christi in the fieldwork is offered on both Wednesdays and Sundays in order to give youth a choice that best fits their schedules, and the initiation program at St. Benedict’s highlights how the initiation process allows us to “celebrate our gifts for ministry and name our entrance into world ministry.”<sup>411</sup>

These websites do commonly include ‘becoming part of the Catholic Church’ in their descriptions, but the means by which people are invited into the church is through appealing to meeting their individual needs and explaining how helpful the faith journey is to the individual. Participation in the local parish is rarely, if ever, mentioned as it seems the

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<sup>408</sup> <http://www.barts.org/rcia.html>. A Google search of the quoted phrase reveals multiple parishes in various parts of the United States using the same or similar language.

<sup>409</sup> “Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults,”

[http://www.icknoxville.org/immaculate\\_conception\\_faith\\_form1.htm](http://www.icknoxville.org/immaculate_conception_faith_form1.htm).

<sup>410</sup> “Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults,” <http://holyfamily.org/content/view/239/419>.

<sup>411</sup> Website citations are not included for reasons of privacy as these churches were involved in the fieldwork.



expectation is that initiation is another facet of a lifelong journey of faith. This “lifelong journey” dimension tends to blur the traditional threshold in which one officially “enters the church” or becomes a member – a concept historically central to the initiation process. One does still indeed become part of the church through baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, but the emphasis appears to increasingly revolve around how the church supports the individual rather than the individual maintaining the institution

This seems especially true in one of the common threads among many of the initiation programs in the churches involved in the fieldwork. The vast majority of them included a “service component” as part of the process in which the initiate needed to participate in a prescribed number of hours of service to the community and/or church. However, the students usually were invited to do their service during the summer months when the regular initiation program was not in session because of lower church attendance. American schools do not hold school during June, July, and August and most families in wealthier contexts like that of this research spend their summer weekends in family cottages outside of the city.<sup>412</sup> The churches suggest students design some kind of service appropriate to them, often done individually, and then hand in their personal report and reflections at another time. The service program is designed around the individual desires of the students.<sup>413</sup>

The subtleties of such language on websites and practice in local parishes therefore hint at the evolution underway in a context where community is fragmented and individuals have a high degree of agency to determine and realize their various choices. The resulting competition creates an environment in which the church is marketing their initiation programs for the attention of the youth and changing the process to reduce perceived barriers

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<sup>412</sup> Lisa Ross, “What You Should Know Before Moving to Minnesota,” *Yahoo Travel*, 12 June 2007, [http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/272894/what\\_you\\_should\\_know\\_before\\_moving.html?cat=16](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/272894/what_you_should_know_before_moving.html?cat=16).

<sup>413</sup> St. Augustine’s also requires one retreat of their initiates, but offers five different times in which individuals can attend. The retreats cover five different topics, so most initiates will not experience several dimensions of the initiation process in the retreats they miss.

in participation since it can be quite difficult to “get them to attend.” This fact is also being documented in recent literature – a brief mention of which is provided below in the final piece of evidence provided in this section related to the evolution.

### ***Recent Literature on the Evolving Nature of Initiation***

In *Transforming Catholicism*, David Maines and Michael McCallion further highlight the challenges of initiation in a context where suburban families have high agency and are disappearing in the summer for travel and time spent at the cabins.<sup>414</sup> Their absence creates a temporal problem in the initiation process that historically followed the liturgical calendar, but is now being reduced to the time between September and April. As a result, the traditional rhythms of the church are being compromised. Maines documents the reports of one initiation director who argued the church must become “more adamant about the liturgical year process especially given the suburbs and the pervasive lack of community and the abundance of individualism.”<sup>415</sup> The lack of awareness that there even is a liturgical calendar which guides the temporal dimension of the ritual process highlights the movement towards individual agency and the reduction of the church’s power in the everyday lives of its constituents.<sup>416</sup> In this way, despite its objections, the church initiation programs have evolved to match the school calendar instead of the liturgical one.

Further evidence of the individualized trends are seen in the work of Kathleen Hughes, who describes the dimensions of ‘mystagogy’ as a current emphasis in the Catholic church. Mystagogy has historically related to the time of instruction in which neophytes are introduced to the secret dimensions of the faith. Currently, however, mystagogy forms the

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<sup>414</sup> Maines and McCallion, *Transforming Catholicism*, 91.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> Joseph Martos, *The Sacraments: An Interdisciplinary and Interactive Study* (Collegeville: College of St. Benedict, 2009), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=Mgk0jD7AuEQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Sacraments:+An+Interdisciplinary+and+Interactive+Study&hl=en&ei=X1X7TefA6ft0gH\\_3pitAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Mgk0jD7AuEQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Sacraments:+An+Interdisciplinary+and+Interactive+Study&hl=en&ei=X1X7TefA6ft0gH_3pitAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 214.

central component of reflection for all Catholic individuals throughout their lifelong faith journey in order that they may further grasp the mysteries of the faith in increasing fashion. It is not simply just part of the initiation process since the sacraments are “no longer discrete ritual moments in the lives of individuals....they are larger and longer processes that nurture personal religious experience in the midst of the community of faith.”<sup>417</sup> As a result, the incorporating dimension of initiation is deemphasized in favor of inviting individuals to reflect and further their individual faith journeys in the context of what the church organization provides; thus meeting their needs for self-fulfillment. Hughes’ text chronicles the individual experience of Catholic participants and how they experience their faith journey throughout the text.

Though several other examples in current literature could be offered, one final example serves to illustrate the overall point without unnecessarily belaboring it. Gerald Foley describes the dilemma church ministries have often created in that they have “been generally oriented toward the radical individualism that permeates our culture. If there is a need, we simply add another program for youth, for parents, for the separated and divorced.”<sup>418</sup> Here Foley is referring to the common propensity of churches to offer group experiences based on individual affinity or desires. In their weekly bulletins, many churches show the many and various programs offered to individuals designed to meet their stage in life, current need, or sense of what is important to them in their faith journey. In the parish of St. Edwards in the fieldwork, for example, no fewer than twenty different contexts are

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<sup>417</sup> Kathleen Hughes, *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament* (Chicago: Liturgical Training Publications, 1999), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=jhrbblc3t8gC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Saying+Amen:+A+Mystagogy+of+Sacrament&hl=en&ei=mlX7TbauHImv0AGb09CwAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=jhrbblc3t8gC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Saying+Amen:+A+Mystagogy+of+Sacrament&hl=en&ei=mlX7TbauHImv0AGb09CwAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 13

<sup>418</sup> Gerald Foley, *Family-Centered Church: A New Parish Model* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1995), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=E\\_0pomv7YToC&pg=frontcover&dq=FamilyCentered+Church:+A+New+Parish+Model+t&hl=en&ei=2VX7TYvaLab30gGS9ry4Aw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=E_0pomv7YToC&pg=frontcover&dq=FamilyCentered+Church:+A+New+Parish+Model+t&hl=en&ei=2VX7TYvaLab30gGS9ry4Aw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 13.

offered to parishioners in which they can engage according to their choice throughout a given week. This diversity of offerings is repeated throughout Catholic (and Protestant) churches in the Minneapolis context, and is yet further evidence of the evolution in initiation which becomes just one more program in which individuals can engage as part of their ongoing personalized journey. The sacraments of initiation are emphasized more than “church quilters” to be sure, but the point is that all of these are offered in an overall ethos of personal choice and individualization. Thus we see, not only in current texts, but in the initiation programs in the churches as well as the reports of those in the fieldwork, hints of an ongoing evolution in which the church offers to support the journey of the individual over and above emphasizing the communal dimension of the initiation process.

### ***Individualization Leading to Further Dissonance?***

As stated at a few different points in the dissertation, though initiation in the Catholic Church is into an invisible community, there is an expectation that Catholic members participate in one localized, visible parish existing in the concrete world of the here and now. By definition, initiated members are expected to be in relationship with other members as they participate in the ritual life of the church. As this is commonly not occurring in the Minneapolis contexts, it appears that churches are evolving in an attempt to retain more members by individualizing the process and offering to meet a person’s needs. Should this effort prove effective for retention, however, the essential community component of Catholic life could be lessened and a new dissonance created where a community gathers for increasingly personalized reasons. This, of course, is likely to already be taking place to some degree as individuals negotiate with one another in any institution, but the effect could be magnified to the extent initiation rituals, and ongoing church practices, are customized to suit the individual.

The resulting dissonance would relate to a gap created between expectations of the church emphasizing that it is meant to be an other-centered community of love and the reality of a group of individuals gathering for increasingly self-serving purposes. Such other-centeredness is essential to historical identity in the Catholic Church as Pope John Paul emphasized the importance of the horizontal relational dimension where one does not only stress the I-Thou aspect of faith, but the social dimension of the “we” where we must “love our neighbor as ourselves.”<sup>419</sup> This social “other-centeredness” is, according to Catholic writer Marion Maendel, a critical dimension of parish life and those who participate in it. Maendel writes:

Helping a child walk for the first time, celebrating survival on New Year’s Eve with a group of battered women, appreciating the relief of a starving, footsore immigrant family as they collapse on the sofa in the entrance after weeks of walking attests to a Gospel message rooted in the sacramentality of the human experience.....Sometimes all we can do is weep in the brokenness of the human condition. In this spirit, we learn with our guests to accompany the condemned Jesus of the poor, who wept for the world.<sup>420</sup>

In addition, Catholic thought historically refers to the community of faith as the “light of the world” because of the love displayed among the “we.” At one time ‘They Will Know We are Christians by our Love’ was almost inescapable at Mass.<sup>421</sup> The relationships in the community distinguish the church from other organizations of disconnected individuals in places of employment or affinity-based clubs as it is the collection of disparate individuals

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<sup>419</sup> John H. Nota, “Phenomenological Experience in Karol Wojtyla,” in *The Thought of Pope John Paul: A Collection of Essays and Studies*, ed. John M. McDermott (Rome: Imprimi Potest, 1992), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=Ti6RDZ0vHcEC&pg=frontcover&dq=The+Thought+of+Pope+John+Paul&hl=en&ei=N1b7TbHILenc0QGTz\\_GGAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Ti6RDZ0vHcEC&pg=frontcover&dq=The+Thought+of+Pope+John+Paul&hl=en&ei=N1b7TbHILenc0QGTz_GGAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 203.

<sup>420</sup> Marion Maendel, “Dorothy Day’s Pilgrimage Continues at Casa Juan Diego: The Pilgrimage Continues.....Poor Teach Harsh and Dreadful Love: A Disillusioned Catholic Worker Stays On,” in *Primary Source Readings in Catholic Justice*, ed. Jerry Windley-Doust (Winona: St. Mary’s Press, 2007), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=ZX\\_7iCfb7CMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Primary+Source+Readings+in+Catholic+Justice&hl=en&ei=Wmf7TZO0AeWv0AHG2pGjAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=ZX_7iCfb7CMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Primary+Source+Readings+in+Catholic+Justice&hl=en&ei=Wmf7TZO0AeWv0AHG2pGjAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 22-23.

<sup>421</sup> White and Mitchell, *Catholic Worship*, 147.

from all walks of life gathering around the Eucharist that speaks of the unity in diversity.<sup>422</sup>

This unity is meant to form an identity that differentiates the church from its surrounding culture; thus greater movement towards a gathering of discrete individuals and away from emphasizing a mystical union of people would seem to create a new kind of dissonance in the church. Even should this prove true, however, some form of new dissonance is to be expected and not feared as this has been the ongoing pattern in the life of the church as it attempts to contextualize its message and mission in the surrounding culture.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the above discussion on the sociological concepts describes the kind of context in which initiation takes place in the Minneapolis suburbs. The description shows a social situation in which individuals negotiate fragmented communities with a high degree of personal agency – thus often choosing contexts in which they are most interested and/or those which they sense will fill their individualized needs. As a result, these factors contribute to the fact that the church does not hold its traditional place of power as manifested in its ability to prescribe the behavior of those in its parish. Youth, in particular, are extremely committed to several different relational spheres, and because these spheres are not interconnected, they are forced to compete against each other for the attention of the youth. Should there be more time and space in this dissertation, consideration could be further given as to why the church may not often win the youth's attention when compared to sports, homework, jobs, friends, and travel. However, these inquiries need to be relegated to future research. It is enough here to stay within the central claim of the dissertation in that Christian initiation is experiencing dissonance in the Minneapolis context and is possibly undergoing a process of evolution

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<sup>422</sup> Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008), Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=UOwpXsHSf1sC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Confronting+Power+and+Sex+in+the+Catholic+Church&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=NWj7TYREeHW0QGZ2oGrAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=res&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=UOwpXsHSf1sC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Confronting+Power+and+Sex+in+the+Catholic+Church&hl=en&src=bmrr&ei=NWj7TYREeHW0QGZ2oGrAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=res&resnum=1&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 139.

towards individualizing initiation in an attempt to improve its rate of retention. In this case, describing the sociological dynamics involved both illuminate the central theoretical claim of dissonance and help provide a predictive trajectory for the evolution of initiation in this context.

## CONCLUSION

The final theoretical claim and contribution of this thesis was not part of the original design. Initially, a *Gesellschaft* context was assumed based on the fact that I grew up in the western suburbs of Minneapolis and experienced life among a series of disconnected relational environments. Over the past twenty years, with the speed of technology and the increasing empowerment it provides, this fragmentation seems to be becoming sharper. I watch as one set of our friends drive their children to school some fifteen miles away each day because they like the school and can take advantage of a governmental policy of “open enrollment” that allows any family to attend school anywhere in the state of Minnesota. I commute over twenty miles to the university. My students spend many hours – even class hours – attempting to keep up on relationships from the past through various social media portals. In such a disconnected setting, I endeavored to determine how past initiates negotiated their various environments according to the values of the initiation – if at all.

However, as outlined in the introduction and detailed in chapter four, the entire project designed for one year of research became two as it became apparent I could not locate enough past initiates in the various churches for appropriate qualitative research. What I discovered, without the bias of a presupposition in which I “set out” in the fieldwork to prove high rates of attrition, was initiates consistently leaving parishes post-initiation, and confirmation directors have little awareness of how to locate them. Based on this data, and with an awareness of the inaccuracy of my previous assumptions, I interviewed a spectrum of informants from various Catholic and Protestant churches as well as a series of wider contacts in order to determine the pervasiveness of the attrition as well as some of the factors contributing to it. From this data, I derived the central claim that there is a dissonance in the initiation process of many churches in Minneapolis. I chose to focus on the Catholic context



primarily for the pragmatic reason that it has the most established literature base for research on expectations for, history of, and behavior in the initiation process.

Furthermore, the interview with Mary Stockbridge taught me that dissonance is not new in the history of Christian initiation. Her wide-ranging awareness of initiation in the Catholic Church detailed multiple eras in which a gap existed between prescription and description in initiation. She also provided the first clues that evolution was a common phenomenon as “Rome was not always ever thus.” This interview was the most instrumental factor in providing the overall structure of the dissertation as well as crystallizing the central claim that dissonance and evolution is a common pattern in the Catholic Church as it seeks to contextualize its identity and values in various locations. This pattern persists into the local context of Minneapolis where its shape relates to high rates of attrition despite the fact that the church prescribes incorporation for its initiated members.

To demonstrate this pattern, then, the dissertation first described four eras in which the initiation process evolved as a result of a significant dissonance – ranging from Augustine and theological matters to the sociological reality of getting drunk at the Eucharist table. The second chapter served as a signpost for the shape of the current dissonance in that sociologists commonly assume incorporation as part of the initiation process. The middle chapters described this dissonance according to the data of the fieldwork, while analyzing its implications, and the final chapter suggested a pending evolution based on the sociological factor of empowered individuals living in fragmented contexts in which the church has a decreasing influence.

With this established, future lines of inquiry could include further information on micro-*Gemeinschaft* contexts like Latino immigrant communities who are staying within the church even as their relationships are part of a macro-*Gesellschaft* environment. Do members

of such communities tend to become increasingly empowered and assimilated into the individualistic ethos of America, thus leading to higher rates of attrition in future generations? Another suggestion would include determining the possibility of a pendulum shift back towards a more community-based orientation in future generations as the lack of adolescent identity leads to more and more deviant behavior – James Larson seemed to think this would be quite possible. Yet another possibility would be to research how social media sites like Facebook and Twitter could facilitate ongoing relationships post-initiation. I recently met with an academic dean at a local Lutheran seminary who suggested we are on the “cusp of another Reformation” because of the possibilities created by such online mediums. He suggested social media could be to this generation, what the printing press was to Martin Luther’s. Future lines of inquiry in order to further understand the dynamics and predict future trends are many.

In the end, the dissonance described in this dissertation is not a sign of weakness, but of the normal and common realities of a negotiation between an institution and its constituents about which many avenues of inquiry could develop. Such dissonance also tends to elicit an evolution in order to bring expectations and behavior into closer alignment. If historical precedent is any indication, the Catholic Church will continue to evolve in order to “reinvent” itself and its initiation process while staying as true as possible to its long-standing identity. Thus the pattern that began in the very origins of the church and persists into the Minneapolis context is also quite likely to continue into the generations ahead in different shapes and forms.

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